

T. SANKUNNI MENON

DIWAN OF COCHIN.



C. Achyuta Menon,



T. SANKUNNI MENON.

THE LIFE
OF
T. SANKUNNI MENON
DIWAN OF COCHIN.
1860-79.


BY
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Sankara Variyar of Cochin", &c.*

TRICHUR:
V. SUNDRA IYER & SONS.
1923.

PREFACE.

The materials for this book were derived partly from the records of the Huzur Secretariat and partly from Sankunni Menon's private papers. The latter consist of his diaries and his demi-official and private correspondence. He maintained a diary more or less regularly for thirty-four years. The earlier diaries are extremely meagre, and are of little biographical value, but the later ones are less scrappy, fuller and more self-revelatory. Only five volumes of the former, however, and thirteen of the latter are now in existence. A part of his demi-official correspondence also is missing, while his other private papers have been so eaten up by moth and white ant that hardly a dozen of them are now decipherable.

All these papers, such as they are, have been placed unconditionally at my disposal by the present head of the Thottekatt family, Mr. T. Sankara Menon, for which my grateful acknowledgments are due to him. My thanks are also due to my friend Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon, a member of another branch of the same family, who went through this book in manuscript and favoured me with

several valuable suggestions. He has also published an excellent translation of the work in Malayalam.

This book is in some respects a continuation of my "Diwan Sankara Variyar of Cochin," an acquaintance with which is presumed on the part of the reader.

TRICHUR,
15th May, 1923. }

C. A. M.



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Note—I have taken the liberty of altering the orthography of proper names, and have generally followed the system adopted by the Government of India. The meanings of some Malayalam words occurring in this book are given in the Index.

My dear Sir

The results of the
matriculation examination
are very good indeed
and I must congratulate
you on the success of
the last year's training.
This letter is intended with
many thanks -

You are probably
aware that it was
proposed, when the

Facsimile of
Sankunni Menon's Hand-writing.

school establishment
not minded to form
an F.A. club when
practicable - As
you took the time to
inquire for forming
such a club - the
question is whether we
shall have a sufficient
number of boys -

Yours faithfully
L. S. [Signature]

T. SANKUNNI MENON.



CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE.

The childhood shows the man
As morning shows the day. MILTON.

Thòttékàt Sankunni Menon, the elder of the two sons of Sankara Variyar, was born on Saturday the 21st April 1823. Nothing is known of his childhood. In the ordinary course, he was initiated into the mysteries of the Malayalam alphabet in his fifth year, and went through the usual *pyal* school curriculam. He was also taught the rudiments of Sanskrit and English.* When he was eleven

* Sankunni Menon's first English tutor was Joachim Augustus, a writer in the Diwan's office. When Sankunni Menon became Diwan, he made Augustus the Manager of his office, which appointment he held throughout the former's administration.

years old, his father, who was then Huzur Sheristadar, was drafted to the Resident's office, and for the next six years Sankara Variyar spent most of his time in Trivandram. In 1836, a Sirkar English School was opened in that town, when Sankara Variyar took his two boys to Trivandram, and got them admitted into the school. The school was under the head-mastership of Mr. J. Roberts, who is known on this coast as the "Powell of Travancore." He was a good scholar, an excellent teacher and a strict disciplinarian, and many of the boys who had the benefit of his training came into prominence in after life. Among Sankunni Menon's school friends were N. Nanu Pillai, who subsequently rose to the Diwanship of Travancore, P. Sankunni Menon, who became a Diwan Peishkar and the historian of Travancore, and C. Vedadri-sadasa Mudaliar, who rose to the bench of the Travancore High Court, and became a thorn on the side of Sir T. Madhava Raw.

Sankunni Menon was the brightest of Roberts' boys. He was at the top of his class throughout the six years that he was in the

school. He was then, as he always continued to be, of studious habits and of a serious turn of mind, and though he was fond of games, he had no stomach for the boisterous frolic of his school fellows. He was good in all subjects, but mathematics was his forte. His interest in mathematics continued throughout his life, and nothing gave him more pleasure than to be asked to solve a mathematical problem, even when pre-occupied with important questions of administration.* He was very good in English as well, and under Mr. Roberts' guidance a love of reading became ingrained in him, which gradually developed into a passion. At the end of six years he stood alone, with no boys of equal attainments to

* The following entries from his diaries are taken at random:— 7TH MARCH 1857.— Solved some mathematical problems for Velanezhi Namburi (a great proficient in Hindu mathematics, well known in his day). 11TH AUGUST 1868.— Solved an algebraical problem after supper, and consequently could not get sleep till 12 last night. 21ST DECEMBER 1873.— Kanippayyur Namburipad here (another proficient in Hindu mathematics). Solved a couple of mathematical problems for him.

form a class. Accordingly, Mr. Roberts wrote to Sankara Variyar:--

"I have told Sankunni that, if you do not remove him, he will have all the benefit I can render in a private course of reading; for, in the school he stands alone, and it seems unlikely at present that a class of boys of equal attainments can be formed and kept up. He is well acquainted with English grammar, has a considerable acquaintance with general history and geography, is perfect in the use of globes in arithmetic logarithms, algebra as far as quadratic equations, plane geometry, plane trigonometry, theoretical and practical, and spherical trigonometry, practical only. He has studied mental philosophy, and is well acquainted with the distinction of the powers of mind, the nature of ideas, propositions, modes, rules, syllogisms, &c."

Sankara Variyar decided that, it was not worth while for his son under the circumstance to remain any longer in Trivandram, and the latter accordingly came down to Ernakulam. The father was extremely proud of his son's character and attainments, and was anxious that he should enter the British service, and General Cullen had promised his good offices to secure him a footing in it. In the

meantime, Sankunni Menon was required to attend the Diwan's office regularly to familiarise himself with office work, and he did so for two years. When Sankara Variyar was satisfied that his son had picked up sufficient knowledge of his work, he appointed him Police Head Gumastah in his own office in July 1844 with the approval of the Resident. He wrote to the latter:—"In the room of the latter, I wish, with your permission, to place *for the present* my eldest son Sankunni (21 years old), who for the last two years, or since he left the Free School of His Highness the Raja of Travancore, has employed a considerable portion of his time in acquiring a knowledge of public business. It would not perhaps be becoming in me to enlarge upon his merits or qualifications. I will only therefore submit for your perusal the accompanying extract of a letter to me from Mr. J. Roberts, the head master of the above school".

The appointment of a young man of twenty-one to the head clerkship of a branch of the Diwan's office was in those days a daring innovation, and was even looked upon as an

infringement of vested interests. None but elderly men with considerable official experience could be expected to do justice to such offices, and no good could come of boys being pitchforked into them. But the young man soon belied their forebodings. Clear-headed and strong-willed as he was, with an old head on his young shoulders and a gravity of manner and conduct beyond his years, Sankunni Menon soon made himself master of his work and of his subordinates, and the grey beards were fain to admit that he was not merely a chip of the old block but the old block itself. He remained in this position for three years, during which he was always on the look out for a footing in the British service, but hitherto without success.

In 1847, however, the Translatorship of the Civil Court at Calicut became vacant, and it was decided to hold a competitive examination for the selection of candidates. Sankunni Menon appeared for the examination, and came out first in the list of successful candidates, and he was accordingly appointed to the post towards the end of the year. General Cullen,

who was exceptionally fond of Sankunni Menon, was well pleased with his young favourite's success, and in his letter to the Madras Government giving cover to the Cochin financial statement for 1846-7, he said, "He (Sankara Variyar) has brought up his two sons on principles like his own, both excellent young men. They were educated in the English school at Trivandram, and the elder son, who was for some time in the Cutcherry with his father, subsequently, with a view to his improvement, entered himself as a candidate for English and Malayalam Translator in the Zilla Court at Calicut, and for which his superior qualifications gained him the selection". "The most Noble the Governor in Council is glad to learn that one of his sons has by his own merits obtained employment in the public service, in which he cannot fail to rise, if he pursues the same upright course of conduct which has distinguished his father."

During the five years that he spent in Ernakulam, Sankunni Menon devoted his leisure hours to reading standard English

authors and studying Sanskrit. He had the advantage of Sanskrit being taught for some time by Pattat Krishnan Nambiyar, who had the reputation of being a remarkably successful teacher of that language. Under him he acquired a fair knowledge of Sanskrit, but did not attain any degree of proficiency in it. In after years he did not keep up his Sanskrit reading systematically as he did his English, but it appears from his diaries that he read a Sanskrit book now and again, and was interested in Sanskrit literature throughout his life. During the leisurely Indian tour he made with the Raja in 1852—3, he studied an elementary treatise on Sanskrit grammar under the famous scholar and physician of Travancore, Pâcchu Muttad, who accompanied the party on tour.

His chief recreations at this period were riding, boating, chess and cards. He was a dashing rider, and was passionately fond of the exercise. Some years later, while riding a race with Raja Virakerala Varma, who was an expert horseman, he had a heavy fall on his chest, which confined him to his room for some

days, and after this he had reluctantly to give up riding under medical service. He was devoted to boating throughout life. When he was the Diwan of Cochin and somewhat advanced in life, he could often be seen in the Cochin backwaters or in the Alway river rowing or steering his boat with all the zest of a boy. At this time of life he was an expert chess player, and played it assiduously, but he had to give it up later on, as the game always gave him a headache and made him sleepless. Cards were his chief diversion all his life; he had a game some forty-eight hours before his death. He had a card party almost every Sunday evening, and at times on other evenings as well.

A year or so after he was appointed Police Head Gumastah, Sankunni Menon married Kurupat Narayani Amma, the step daughter of his father. She was a handsome lady, remarkable for her good nature and engaging manners. She died in 1858, when she was thirty years old. Sankunni Menon was devotedly attached to her, and though he was only thirty-five at the time of her death, he never married again. He

kept her memory green in his heart throughout life, for in the privacy of his diary we find him often paying a tender tribute to it and invariably on every anniversary of the day of her death. He had two sons and a daughter by her. The sons received a good education, and both of them took their degree in 1871, being the first natives of Cochin to do so. Sankunni Menon was very ambitious for his eldest son and namesake,* and got him a good start in life in the office of the Collector of Malabar. Though shrewd and intelligent, the latter was easy-going and altogether devoid of ambition himself. He retired from the service as a Sub-Magistrate, and died in 1902. The second son T. C. Krishna Menon graduated in law as well, and, after being enrolled as a vakil of the Madras High Court, he was entertained in the Travancore service as a judge in 1878 by the

*He notes with satisfaction in his diary on the 28th April 1871:—"My sons arrived this morning from Madras with their B. A. gowns and hoods. Sankunni received a prize from Lord Napier, and on that occasion Lord and Lady Napier and Mr. Robinson (Member of Council, asked him to give their compliments to me."

Ayilyam Maharaja, who was always very favourably disposed towards Sankunni Menon. He was subsequently appointed a judge of the Cochin Chief Court early in 1887, and retired from the service in 1905. Mr. Krishna Menon and his sister Kunji Amma are still living.



CHAPTER II.

IN THE BRITISH SERVICE.

England's High Chancellor, the destined heir,
In his soft cradle, to his father's chair,
Whose even thread the Fates spin round and full
Out of their choicest and their whitest wool.

Sankunni Menon did not remain long at Calicut. A little more than a year after his appointment as Translator in the Civil Court, he was transferred to (British) Cochin as Sheristadar of the Principal Sadr Amin's Court there. Nothing is now known of his life and work in these two courts. That his work must have been very satisfactory is evidenced by his rapid promotion. In 1849, he passed the necessary departmental tests, and in the following year he was appointed District Munsiff, and posted to Veliyangód almost on the orders of Cochin, where he remained undisturbed for about seven years.

As Munsiff, he enjoyed quite a unique reputation. He was the best educated Munsiff

in Malabar at this time, and perhaps the only one who was thoroughly honest. He devoted a good deal of time during this period to the study of law. These qualifications, combined with his high character, his grave courtesy, and his gentlemanly behaviour, made him a highly respected figure in South Malabar. The Civil Judge, Mr. Morris and then Mr. Collin esteemed him highly, and showed their esteem quite openly. The latter recommended him in 1857 for a Principal Sadr Amin's place, and assured him that he would get it at the next vacancy. The great Mr. Holloway, who was in Malabar at this time, made much of Sankunni Menon, and sent to him for his criticism and suggestions all his papers on Malabar customs, usages and tenures. The Madras Government also referred to him many of their legislative measures for opinion.

It is easy to see from his diaries of these years, meagre and irregular though they are, that this was the happiest period of Sankunni Menon's life. His father was then at the height of his reputation, and he was himself rising

steadily in the world. He had plenty of congenial work, but not too much of it, and his favourite authors and his favourite games occupied his leisure hours. He had a loving wife, and enjoyed good health, which was not the case in his later life. He had a large and ever-increasing circle of friends, and enjoyed their respect and attachment. He kept open house, and hardly a day passed without welcome guests to partake of his hospitality.

The even tenour of Sankunni Menon's life was disturbed in 1852. Raja Virakerala Varma ascended the *masnad* of Cochin in the previous year. This young and accomplished Prince was anxious to improve himself by making an Indian tour before settling down to his work, and decided to set out in July 1852, soon after the year of mourning was over. His Highness, who was uncommonly fond of Sankunni Menon and held him in high esteem, wanted him not only to accompany him but also to be in responsible charge of the party. At the request of the Sirkar, therefore, the Madras Government granted him a year's leave for the purpose. The party started with but a smas

retinue and without any pomp and circumstance of royalty. His Highness even made a special request to the Government "to dispense with salutes and other ceremonials of a similar nature" at all the halting stations. Pāliyat Valiya Achan, the premier nobleman of the State, accompanied the party, and Dr. Pringle, the Civil Surgeon of British Cochin and *ex-officio* Darbar Physician, was in medical charge of the same. His Highness, the officers and the more important members of the party rode on horseback or in palkies, while the others walked. They travelled only between ten and twenty miles a day, and lived generally in tents. The party travelled leisurely by way of Coimbatore, Bangalore, Poona, Indore, Bhopal, &c. and reached Benares early in February 1853. His Highness's intention was to continue his journey by way of Calcutta, Jagannath, Masulipatam and Madras, and return to Cochin after visiting Rameswaram and other important stations in South India. But this programme was not destined to be carried out, for at Benares His Highness had an attack of small-pox, and succumbed to it on the 21st February.

Sankunni Menon thus reports the sad event to the Diwan :—

Honoured father,

With deep regret I have to announce to you the demise of His Highness the Raja of Cochin at about 11 o'clock this morning. Since the despatch of my last letter, His Highness was suffering from diarrhoea. Yesterday morning he began to pass blood, and we soon afterwards found that he had also small-pox. He passed more blood during night and this morning, and the weakness and a fit of short duration like the one he had the other day carried him away. No one expected the event so soon, though the symptoms were far from being good. What can I say more ?

Your obedient son *

Small pox played great havoc among the party. Several of the men died, Paliyat Achan being among the number, and the rest hastened back to Cochin in batches. Sankunni Menon, however, proceeded to Calcutta, and returned to Cochin by the east coast route *via* Madras. The death of the Prince was a great

* This is the only letter of Sankunni Menon's to his father that I have come across. The rest appear to have been irrecoverably lost.

blow to him : he had had every reason to expect much from His Highness for himself and for the State. If His Highness had lived a few years more, Sankunni Menon would certainly have succeeded his father in the Diwanship. The tour however did him one great good : it distinctly raised him in the estimation of his countrymen notwithstanding its sad finale. The efficient manner in which he carried out this difficult undertaking, the calmness, strength and resourcefulness which he exhibited on all occasions created a great impression on the whole party, and the reports that they made to their friends and acquaintances on their return to Cochin were certainly not wanting in minuteness or picturesqueness.*

It was while Sankunni Menon was still stationed at Veliyangod that his father died, and was succeeded by the Diwan Peishkar Venkata Rau, who was the protege and

* Sankunni Menon kept a detailed journal of the tour, but unfortunately all but a few pages of it have been lost. These few pages show that the journal would have proved interesting reading, if it had been preserved.

favourite of General Cullen. Sankara Variyar's great ambition was that his son should succeed him, and it was a great disappointment to him that he did not live long enough to bring about that consummation. The following is from Sankunni Menon's diary describing his father's death-bed scene, parts of which have already been quoted elsewhere:— "He then told me, 'I thought you would have been enabled after my time to become my'—successor, I think, he meant, for he had more than once expressed that wish to me when well, but a hiccough prevented him from continuing the sentence'. With a view to familiarise him with Cochin affairs, Sankara Variyar freely discussed administrative matters with his son whenever they met, and kept up a regular correspondence with him at other times. All that correspondence is lost except the two letters given below.

Ernakulam, 15th May 1851.

My dear son,

The General wants me to give an addition to Venkata Rau's salary, or a palki allowance when moving, and I have made a communication on the

subject to His Highness in order to ascertain his wishes. In consideration of Venkata Rau's constant movement with the General, I think he deserves to get an allowance of 30 or 35 rupees per month.

Your loving father.

Velanthavalam, 30th November 1853.

My dear son,

I have the pleasure to inform you that the land assessment with which I was engaged for the last 18 days has been completed to-day, and the increase of revenue from the lands (15,000 *parahs*) now inspected and measured will be about 4,000 rupees per annum. I intend to go to Kozhinjampara this evening, and thence to Tattamangalam within two or three days. From that place I return to Trichur by the 5th or 6th December.

I am, your friend.

On the death of his father, Sankunni Menon naturally thought that the Diwan Peishkarship would be offered to him, though he did not want it for several reasons, the chief of which was that he did not like the idea of serving under Venkata Rau. On the completion of the funeral ceremonies he visited the palace, when the Raja, the Senior Rani and other members of the royal family spoke

highly of his father's services, and when he called on the Resident, the latter "spoke very kindly and highly of my father, that he left the country in a very prosperous state and with a full treasury, and that his good name would do us good hereafter". Neither His Highness nor the Resident, however, spoke of his own chances in Cochin, which somewhat mortified him. Two months later he wrote about his advancement in the British service direct to the Governor Lord Harris, whose good opinion of Sankara Variyar was well known. In connection with this he says in his diary on the 18th February 1857:—"I must try to get myself promoted, and as my father's character and services form no inconsiderable part of my claim to promotion, it is well to apply before they are forgotten. My own Prince does not seem to care a bit who is appointed to the Peishkarship, and I don't think that it is a place worth fighting for; and yet that they should not pay the least attention to my claims is somewhat annoying. I served the Sirkar for three years, accompanied the Raja to Benares, which cost me about Rs. 6,000, of which they

allowed me only about 3,000. My father brought the country to the highest state of prosperity, the vacancy is created by his death, and there is no other person in the country qualified for the office”.

Sankunni Menon was transferred from Veliyangod to Ponnani in September 1857, and thence to Ernad in January 1859. It was when he was stationed at Ponnani that he lost his young wife, and soon after his transfer to Ernad, her only brother, to whom Sankunni Menon was much attached, died an untimely death. Except for these, his life at Ponnani and Manjeri was an uneventful one. He was now hopefully looking out for early promotion to a Principal Sadr Amin's place, and it was therefore with considerable surprise that he saw the announcement in the Gazette of his appointment as a Deputy Collector. *March 31*—Several Deputy Collectors and Magistrates appointed, and among them a Sankunni Menon (which must be myself) to Tinnevely.” The

* It is interesting to note from his diary what store he set by his brother Govindā Menon's opinion in these matters. ‘*April 1*. — Before delivering over charge,

class of officers designated Deputy Collectors was a new creation, and Sankunni Menon, with A. Seshayya Sastri and V. Ramiengar, belonged to the very first batch of such officers. His selection was apparently due to Lord Harris himself. It was well for himself and for the State that Sankunni Menon was promoted to a Deputy Collectorship and not to a Sadr Aminship. The experience that he gained as a revenue executive officer and as a first class magistrate must have proved of great benefit to him as Diwan, who was then also the Chief Magistrate of the State.

Sankunni Menon proceeded to Tinnevely without delay, and took charge of his new office about the middle of April 1859. On his way he halted at Ernakulam, paid his respects to His Highness and other members of the royal family, who were highly gratified by his promotion, and visited the Diwan Venkata Rau to whom, precarious as his tenure of office was, Sankunni Menon's rise was not

I wish to know brother's opinion." "*April 2*—Brother's letter received this morning, says I should accept the appointment."

quite so gratifying. "The Diwan does not appear well pleased with my promotion. He says it is a poor appointment and that there are three or four above me, &c."! Sankunni Menon remained in Tinnevelly only for a year, but during this period he had heavy work and constant attacks of fever. The district was under-manned, and was also in an unsettled condition. He had at times the police charge of as many as ten Taluks, which necessitated constant touring, and touring in those days was far from being a pleasant undertaking, especially when one was subject to frequent bouts of fever. "Quinine, quinine, quinine, 24 grains to-day!" is typical of many entries in his journal at this period. Mr. J. Silver was his Collector, an able and conscientious man, but particularly hard to please. Sankunni Menon, however, seems to have pleased him right enough, for he complimented his deputy more than once on the excellence of his work, especially his magisterial work. One of his minor worries in this place was the swarm of Malabar pilgrims to Rameswaram who sought his help with irritating frequency, Tinnevelly

being then the high road for such pilgrims. "Many Malabar pilgrims returning from Rameswaram. I had to feed some of them and provide them with money for their travelling expenses". A characteristic entry.

In the meantime, affairs in Cochin were coming to a head. Venkata Rau, who rose to the Diwanship by the same steps as Sankara Variyar, had considerable official experience, and he had also received a fairly good English education. General Cullen had strictly enjoined him to conduct the administration exactly on the lines laid down by his predecessor and to attempt no innovations. He followed this advice, and everything went on smoothly at first, but in little more than a year troubles began. Venkata Rau and the Raja's *Sarvadhikaryakar*, or Secretary and Palace Manager, Parameswara Aiyer of Nemmara, had been close friends for several years; there was a mutual understanding between them to exploit the former's influence with the Resident and the latter's with His Highness for their joint and several benefit. But not long after Venkata Rau became Diwan,

misunderstandings began to arise between them, which eventually developed into deadly enmity.* They were both equally arrogant, unscrupulous and greedy of power and wealth, and their character can be judged from the fact that the Diwan brought a charge of murder against his quondam friend, while the latter preferred an equally false one of abetment of murder against the former. As Parameswara Aiyer's influence was paramount in the palace, His Highness made his favourite's quarrel his own, and demanded the removal of the Diwan. In this and the subsequent squabbles which it is not necessary to detail here, General Cullen supported his protege as strongly and as uniformly as he did Sankara Variyar, but one important circumstance rendered this support unavailing in the present

* A man of little or no education though he was, Parameswara Aiyer got His Highness to suggest his name to General Cullen for the office of Diwan Peishkar. But the latter peremptorily vetoed the suggestion. Parameswara Aiyer thought that, if Venkata Rau was honestly inclined to help him, he could have got the Resident to sanction the appointment. This appears to have been the first cause of the misunderstanding.

case. Sankara Variyar enjoyed the hearty sympathy and devoted attachment of the people of Cochin, while Venkata Rau alienated popular sympathy by the reckless high-handedness and peculation which characterised his administration, especially since his spilt with the palace. He removed from all grades of office on frivolous charges many respectable men on the suspicion that they sympathised with the palace party, and installed therein creatures of his own, who proceeded to enrich themselves and their master by exactions from the people. The Diwan also neglected to maintain properly the religious and charitable institutions, then the most cherished of all the institutions in the State. These and other acts of commission and omission set the people against the Diwan, and an influential deputation accordingly waited upon the Governor of Madras at Ootacamund and another subsequently in Madras with numerous signed memorials, praying for the redress of their grievances. Again, when His Excellency visited Cochin in 1859, over ten thousand people surrounded the Bolghatty Residency,

vociferously praying for the removal of their oppressor.

The Madras Government now realised that they could no longer, in justice and fairness to the Raja and his subjects, support the Resident, much less the Diwan. General Cullen by this time became so autocratic that he neglected to carry out the wishes of his Government when they did not coincide with his own. This and the repeated complaints of the Rajas of Travancore and Cochin led the Government of India to advise the Madras Government, which had hitherto endured him on account of his past brilliant services, both military and civil, to suspend General Cullen and appoint a commission to enquire into his conduct, but the Madras Government inclined to the opinion that the enquiry should precede suspension. When matters reached this stage, General Cullen got out of the difficulty by suddenly resigning his office. He was succeeded by Mr. F. N. Maltby in January 1860. The latter, in the words of the late Maharaja of Travancore, "was in every way fit to represent the British Government in a Native Court.

His great official experience, his eminent talents, his excellent literary powers, his warm and generous heart, his humane sympathies, his keen sense of humour, his love of truth and justice, his abhorrence of all that was mean and morally sinuous and his polished and persuasive manners formed a happy combination rarely seen". Within a few weeks of the arrival of Mr. Maltby, Venkata Rau was retired on pension, and he left the State unwept, unhonoured and unsung.

The choice of a successor to Venkata Rau presented no difficulty. Sankunni Menon was universally acclaimed as the fittest man for the place. Neither his Highness nor the Resident had any doubt in the matter, but there was one man who viewed the prospect with anything but delight. Parameswara Aiyer had a well-grounded fear that, with a man of Sankunni Menon's attainments, character and prestige at the head of the administration, he would have to sink into the comparative insignificance in which he had to remain in Sankara Variyar's time. He therefore prevailed upon His Highness to suggest to the Resident the

appointment of the First Judge of the Appeal Court to the Diwanship and that of Sankunni Menon's brother Govinda Menon to the Diwan Peishkarship, an arrangement which, while leaving his own power and influence unaffected, would, it was hoped, satisfy the advocates of Sankunni Menon's appointment. But Mr. Maltby made short work of all such suggestions, and the place was without unnecessary delay offered to and accepted by Sankunni Menon. Speculations on what might have been are probably idle, but one cannot help the reflection that, if Sankunni Menon had remained in the British service, he would in all human probability have risen to one of the highest offices then open to the natives of India. To Sankunni Menon, however, no place was more welcome and more desirable than the Diwanship of Cochin.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE MINISTERIAL CHAIR.

A pleasing form, a firm yet cautious mind,
Sincere, though prudent, constant, yet resigned ;

....

An honest courtier, yet a patriot too,
Just to his prince, and to his country true. POPE.

Sankunni Menon assumed charge of the administration on the 14th March 1860, and continued in his high office for the unusually long period of nineteen years and four months. It is not proposed here to give a detailed account of his administration in its chronological order, as it is likely to prove wearisome to the ordinary reader. All that will be attempted is a cursory narrative of the general and characteristic features of his work in its several branches, showing the state of things as he found them, the steps that he took for their improvement, and the conditions in which he left them on his retirement. Before pro-

ceeding to this narrative, it may not be out of place here to make some observations on his general policy, his methods of work, the difficulties that he had to encounter and the means he adopted to surmount them.

Sankunni Menon did not find the Diwanship a bed of roses. As he himself said twenty-two years later, "he came into office at a period of transition—on the retirement of one Diwan and the inauguration of a new policy under the auspices of that able Resident Mr. F. N. Maltby. In following the course of progress then initiated there were difficulties to be overcome, prejudices to be combated, interests to be reconciled, systems of long-standing to be re-modelled, or superceded." He was an enthusiastic reformer, but he wanted the reforms to be gradual and well-considered. He had no faith in startling innovations, in changes for their own sake, or in bringing the administration into line with that of British India in all matters. He had thus to steer clear between the Scylla of the Residency and the Charibdys of the Palace, between the reforming zeal of the Residents whose ideas

on the subject consisted mainly in reproducing in Cochin the conditions prevailing in British India, especially in the Districts with which they were best acquainted, and the conservative inertia and the ingrained oriental ideas of the Princes and their unofficial advisers, who would have liked nothing better than a reversion to the absolutism of a bye-gone period. Sankunni Menon had thus to play the one against the other, to use the Residency as a lever to move the Palace, and the latter as a brake to moderate and steady the pace of the former. In this manner he managed to get the second best of things, which, accordingly to Lord Morley, is all that even the most fortunate administrators can expect to achieve.

A few examples taken at random will make my meaning clear. According to the immemorial custom of the State, adoptions require the sanction of the Sovereign, and adoptees have to pay fees according to a graduated scale on succeeding to the property. Some Konkan Brahmans complained to the Resident against this practice, and prayed that the non-indigenous sections of the population should be

exempted from this impost. The Resident Mr. H. Newill readily took up the cudgels on their behalf. "This exaction," he said, "is opposed to all civilised ideas as to the rights of property. As no such thing exists in British India, and as in Travancore it is confined to the Malayalis who pay no other tax, I would urge upon the consideration of His Highness the Raja the propriety of at least conceding the exemption as exists in Travancore".* The Diwan replied:—

"Each country has its own mode of taxation, and the non-existence of a particular tax in one country does not in itself constitute a valid objection to the levy of such a tax in another. You are no doubt aware that many taxes which do not exist either in Cochin or Travancore are in force in British India. His Highness fails to see anything objectionable in a

* If Mr. Newill lived twenty years more, he would have seen England adopting Cochin's uncivilised ideas as to the rights of property. Even natural heirs have now to pay heavy succession duties in England. His assertion in regard to the practice in Travancore was mainly incorrect. When he wrote this letter, he had been Resident in Travancore and Cochin for more than three years.

succession tax, especially in a country where the tax is demanded only of persons who succeed to property to which they have no other claim than that derived by adoption, a mode of succession which requires the consent of the sovereign. To exempt particular classes from taxation is, I think, always objectionable, and His Highness sees no reason for exempting from the payment of the fee in question all classes of His Highness's subjects except Malayalis, as recommended in the last para of your letter. In this country the Malayalis are not exempt from the payment of other taxes".

In some District in which he had served, one of our Residents saw Singapore teak used by the P. W. D. Officers for building purposes. On coming to Cochin he forthwith urged the Sirkar to get down Singapore teak for the great Shoranur bridge which was then under construction. "His Highness considers it bad policy," said Sankunni Menon, "to import teak from Singapore for the Shoranur bridge, when we have teak of the best quality on the spot, which we find it difficult to dispose of to advantage". Similar instances will be found in the subsequent chapters.

The old idea that the State was the private

property of the sovereign did not die an easy death in Cochin. The civil list of the ruler and his family was fixed in 1835, but constant attempts were made ever since by the Rajas to get behind that arrangement by making occasional demands for extra payments from the treasury for one reason or another. Owing to the unpleasantness arising from these demands, Mr. Maltby was somewhat disposed to agree to a suggestion made by His Highness not long after Sankunni Menon's advent that some portion of the balance in the treasury might be set apart every year to be disposed of in such manner as His Highness might see fit. The Diwan strongly objected to this measure. "His Highness," he said, "is sure to take the whole of the amount so set apart and to ask for more, and the Resident will still have the unpleasant duty of declining to accede to His Highness's wishes." The proposal was accordingly vetoed by the Madras Government.

The following extract from a demi-official letter from the Diwan to the Resident in June 1862 is self-explanatory :—

"I have submitted for your advice an order which

I received from His Highness the Raja to disburse from the public treasury nearly Rs. 20,000 for the performance of certain ceremonies. This is an unusual demand, and, if granted, will only lead to still further demands. The ceremony is a private one, and should therefore be performed at His Highness's private expense. Formerly the Rajas used to drain the public treasury by constantly drawing upon it for ceremonies and presents, and the consequence was that the State was on the brink of bankruptcy, when Mr. Casamajor fixed His Highness's personal allowance, and formed a fund for the performance of all State ceremonies in 1835. Since that year, our affairs have prospered.... His Highness cannot perceive the beneficial effects of these arrangements, and will be glad if he can set them aside altogether, or render them nugatory by repeatedly obtaining more money from the treasury than what is therein sanctioned. I remonstrated with His Highness when he mentioned to me his intention to send such a *Titturam* (royal writ), but His Highness is rather difficult to convince when the argument is against his obtaining money, and if he will hear reason, there are those who would not allow him to do so. The Sarvadhikaryakar is no friend of mine, as you are probably aware of. He puts up His Highness to make these unreasonable demands, so that, if they are granted, he gets the credit of having got so much money for His Highness, and, if I do not support the demand

and it is in consequence refused by the Resident, he succeeds in prejudicing His Highness against me, for which he is always glad to have an opportunity. These considerations and His Highness's personal request that I should recommend compliance with his wishes have induced me to give an unwilling support to His Highness's demand in my official letter. As this is the first request of the kind made by His Highness since your arrival, it will perhaps be as well to assist him to a certain extent by granting him one-third of the estimate made by the Manager, which one-third will be found, if I am not very much mistaken, to be equal to one-half of the actual expenditure."

The Resident of course acted according to this suggestion. The civil list allowances, though some additions were made thereto since 1835, were becoming inadequate owing to the rise in the cost of living, and in 1865 the Raja wanted his own and the Senior Rani's allowances to be raised. The Diwan strongly recommended these increases officially, and made the following suggestion in a demi-official communication :—

"These increases will be of the greatest benefit to the State if they become the means of modifying the present state of the *uzhiyam* service, which I believe

they will, if, when sanctioning the increase, you press upon His Highness the importance of purchasing all provisions and other things in the market and at a fair price instead of, as at present, through numerous low paid public officials, for whom the opportunities which such a system must needs offer of defrauding and oppressing the ryots are too tempting to withstand." In reply to a further reference from the Resident he adds—: "The *uzhiyam** service is a deep-rooted evil, and must be removed by degrees and with care. It would scarcely be practicable to abolish it at once. What I proposed was to modify it to such an extent as would prevent the system weighing too heavily on the ryots and being an engine of oppression in the hands of the village servants. I have not mentioned anything on the subject in my official letter, as I am of opinion that the proposal should come officially from the British representative. The Rajas consider the *uzhiyam* service as a prerogative enjoyed by them from time immemorial, and are generally unwilling to give it up, but from the humane disposition of the present Raja I am led to believe that His Highness will be prepared to do

* A system of forced labour, and of under payment for articles supplied to the palace &c. A fuller account will be found in Chapter VIII.

much for the amelioration of the condition of his subjects.”.

In sanctioning the proposed increment accordingly, the Governor in Council expressed the hope “that the increased allowances would enable the Raja to dispense with the system of under payment and the employment of *uzhiyam* service in obtaining supplies for the palace”. This gave the opening that Sankunni Menon desired to take action in the matter.

During the first four years of his administration Sankunni Menon was considerably handicapped by the machinations of Parameswara Aiyar. The Brahman began life as a private and menial servant of the Raja, when the latter was a young Prince. “He made himself so useful and necessary to the Prince (who was seldom in good health) by his services about his person that these duties were continued even after His Highness ascended the *masnad*, and Parameswara Aiyer became the Sarvadhikaryakar. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that His Highness became attached to his old servant, who became possessed of great influence over His Highness, an

influence which he seldom used either for his own credit or for that of His Highness. Uneducated and unprincipled, he directed his attention to his own aggrandisement, and to obtain his objects, he was never very scrupulous as to the means he employed. ... A reconciliation appears to have taken place between the Sarvadhī and his recent foe Venkata Rau, and the former was actually desirous of seeing the latter appointed Diwan. With this view he opened a correspondence with the late Diwan through his brother Rama Rau, who was the Head Accountant of my office, and in January 1862 Venkata Rau himself came down to Ernakulam from Coimbatore, where he had taken his abode after his retirement; but before they had time to commence an agitation, Mr. Maltby became aware of the Ex-Diwan's arrival here, and he considered his presence here to be so objectionable that he directed him to leave the country at once. Parameswara Aiyer continued his intrigues to a much later period".

The Raja himself was very favourably disposed towards Sankunni Menon. His Highness had a high opinion of his character

and ability, and had been fond of him from his boyhood. Whatever proposals the Diwan made and personally explained His Highness always agreed to, but when his back was turned, the almost hypnotic influence of the favourite began to have its play. Sankunni Menon was considerably thwarted and annoyed by his evil influence, but Mr. Maltby's persuasive diplomacy and, where necessary, his stern masterfulness enabled him to carry out several important reforms during this period. His Highness, as already mentioned, had always been in indifferent health. In 1863 his health began seriously to decline, and after a lingering illness he died on the 7th February 1864.

With the accession of Raja Sir Rama Varma to the *masnad*, Sankunni Menon's troubles came to an end so far as the Palace was concerned. At this juncture Parameswara Aiyer over-reached himself. When he found that the late Raja's recovery was hopeless, he "directed his attention to the removal of all obstacles which might interfere with his exercising the same influence over His Highness's successor that he had exercised over His

Highness himself. The Elaya Raja (i. e. the present Raja) had a manager whom he liked and in whom Parameswara Aiyer was afraid of finding a rival when His Highness came to the *masnad* ... By dexterous but unscrupulous expedients Parameswara Aiyer prevailed upon His Highness to promise his late uncle, who was on his death bed, that he would dismiss his manager, and never employ him in the Palace again. His Highness kept his word, but was so disgusted with Parameswara Aiyer's conduct in the matter that he lost all confidence in him, a result which he did not appear to have anticipated. His Highness had also other cause of complaint and displeasure against the Sarvadhikaryakar, and when the latter found that he had no influence with the Raja and that His Highness had no wish to retain his services, he resigned his appointment". He then attached himself to the next Elaya Raja, or heir apparent, and became his adviser and evil genius.

The new Maharaja had the most sincere affection and admiration for Sankunni Menon, and his confidence in the minister was only

equalled by the latter's loyal devotion to the former. Throughout his administration Sankunni Menon did nothing without consulting His Highness or behind his back; even in matters not requiring his sanction, the Diwan kept His Highness informed of what was going on. When at head quarters, where he spent eight or nine months in the year, he visited the Raja at least once a week, and spent a couple of hours with him, explaining and discussing current matters. His Highness readily sanctioned the Diwan's proposals, except where they involved permanent increase of public expenditure or financial commitments involving risk, or affected his own privileges and prerogatives and the social usages of the people. What Lord Beaconsfield said of himself may be said of Sankunni Menon: he never contradicted his Sovereign. If His Highness objected to any proposal of his, he dropped the subject at once, but reverted to it at subsequent interviews with fresh arguments and explanations. If, in some rare cases involving no important question of principle, His Highness still remained obstinate,

Sankunni Menon yielded gracefully, and behaved as if he was converted to his master's views. The general impression of the people in his time was that Sankunni Menon had an absolutely free hand in all matters, but his private papers clearly show the error of that impression.

Sankunni Menon has left on record his mode of transacting business with His Highness and the Resident. Mr. A. Arbuthnot, the Senior Member of Council, was sent by the Madras Government to Trivandram early in 1872 to effect a reconciliation between the Maharaja and his Diwan Sir T. Madhava Rau. On his way back, he halted at the Bolghatty Residency, when Sankunni Menon paid a visit to him.

“Called on Mr. Arbuthnot at 3 P. M. and had a long conversation with him. He said that he went out to bring about a reconciliation between the Maharaja and his Diwan and that he succeeded for the present, but how long it would last it was difficult to say. The Diwan has promised to treat his master with greater respect, and the Raja has consented to take him into his favour again. The latter complained of things being done by the

Diwan without consulting him, instancing the getting out of a Professor without his previous knowledge. With regard to the present case (treasury defalcation), the Diwan appears to have summoned some of the Palace servants at night and examined them without Highness's permission. He asked whether I would do such things here, and I answered in the negative. He asked me how matters of importance were transacted here. I told him that I see the Raja once a week, and speak to him verbally of such matters, and obtain his consent. Should he object to any of the minor details, I generally give in. Then I write to the Resident, and, should he approve, submit the matter officially to His Highness, and it is sanctioned. Should the Resident object, His Highness hears nothing more on the subject. I expressed the opinion that this was the best plan, as His Highness is kept in good humour by being previously consulted, and has the honour of giving the final sanction, and it prevents any collision between the Raja and the Resident. Mr. Arbuthnot seemed to approve of it. He asked whether I experienced any difficulties, and I said no, and gave a good description of His Highness's character. I also expressed my belief that it would be a great misfortune to Travancore, should the Sirkar lose Sir Madhava Rau's services."

This Raja had a favourite, Cheruvattūr Nārayanan Namburi by name, who gradually rose in favour and influence since about 1870. He was not quite of the depraved type of Parameswara Aiyer, nor was his influence over his master so absolute. He was in fact one of the least unpopular members of an unpopular class. He had a wholesome fear of Sankunni Menon, and generally refrained from interference in official matters. But when he gained in experience and self-confidence, he began to be more meddlesome. "Cheruvattur Namburi is becoming troublesome," Sankunni Menon notes in diary, "sending recommendations to public servants not only for appointments but also regarding cases pending before them. I hear he makes money by such transactions. He is no doubt a great favourite of His Highness, but I am sure His Highness will not tolerate such proceedings, if he knew all about them. I fear I must open His Highness's eyes one of these days." He did open His Highness's eyes accordingly with satisfactory results. Sankunni Menon now and then gave the

favourite a gentle but effective hint whenever he found him over-stepping the bounds of propriety, and also showed him that he could expect no special favour in official matters.

"14th January 1876.—Disposed of the long-standing dispute between Cheruvattūr Nambūri and Vellamparambu Nambūri (in favour of the latter)."*23rd January.*—Cheruvattur dissatisfied with my decision. Told him to have recourse to the civil courts." After his time, however, the favourite began to be more self-assertive, but His Highness would not and did not tolerate the kind of aggrandisement of which Parameswara Aiyer was guilty.

In the course of his long administration Sankunni Menon was associated with eight successive Residents. * He succeeded in get-

* F. N. Maltby	2 years	4 months
W. Fisher	2 „	1 „
H. Newill	4 „	10 „
G. A. Ballard	4 „	6 „
J. J. Minchin	1 „	3 „
A. Macgregor	2 „	1 „
H. E. Sullivan	1 „	1 „
J. C. Hannington	1 „	1 „

ting on more or less smoothly with all of them, and they, one and all, have placed on record their high opinion of his character and ability. Of all these officers Sankunni Menon thought most highly of Mr. Maltby. When he heard of that gentleman's death in 1877, he remarked, "He was my first Resident, and by far the ablest of the seven Residents who have represented the British Government in these two Native States in my time. It was he who brought about the present satisfactory relations between the Raja, the Resident and the Diwan. He was a real statesman and a good man, but unfortunately illness compelled him to retire before he was two years in this country." Mr. Ballard was his next favourite. "With all his rough exterior I found him a good man and an able official." Mr. Macgregor was the least liked of his Residents. Sankunni Menon found him unmannerly, offensive and unprincipled. It was the rough way and over-bearing conduct of Anglo-Indian administrators that, in the opinion of Sankunni Menon, made British administration so unpopular in India. This unpopularity often made



T. SANKUNNI MENON.

him sad, for he was a staunch supporter of the British connection and a warm admirer of British character. "Just finished Meadows Taylor's interesting story of himself," he notes in his diary in 1877. "I wish all European officers were like him, as in that case I am sure the British rule will be come more popular."



CHAPTER IV.

JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION.

Fill the seats of justice,
With good men, not so absolute in goodness
As to forget what human frailty is. TALFOURD.

The law was made more just, the tribunals were purified, the rights of conscience received at least a partial recognition. LORD MC-RELEY.

Having been a judicial officer in the British service for several years and fully realising the importance of having an honest, efficient and independent judiciary, Sankunni Menon turned his early attention to the improvement of this most important branch of administration. Before his time judicial appointments were conferred upon men with no special qualifications; their powers and functions were not clearly defined; they were ill-paid and generally corrupt; the law that they were required to administer was extremely vague, being the customary law of the country

modified by the Regulations passed in 1835, and the doors of the bar were open to any one who might choose to enter them. The judges were under the control of the Diwan, who issued instructions for their guidance, but after General Cullen's appointment as Resident, he usurped this power, and notwithstanding the Raja's protest, continued to exercise the exclusive right of control and supervision over the courts! It must however be admitted that neither the qualifications nor the *morale* of the judges of this period rendered it expedient to give finality to all their decisions and that control of some kind was rightly deemed essential in the interests of justice.

Within two years of his appointment Sankunni Menon effected considerable improvement in the *personnel* of the judges, and their salaries were doubled. The Appeal Court and the two Zillah Courts consisted of three judges each, one of whom was a Pandit well versed in ancient Hindu law. Three old incompetent men among them were retired on pension, and their places given to better men. One of the

latter was a scion of a Dutch aristocratic family, John D'Albedyhill by name, who had earned a good name as a Zilla Judge in Travancore. He was made the Second Judge of the Appeal Court. Sankunni Menon seems to have been fairly satisfied by the new arrangements, for he told the Resident that "the Appeal Court as now constituted was a highly respectable tribunal and would command the confidence of the people." The new judge especially appeared to him to be "a very good gentleman, fond of business and anxious to perform his duties satisfactorily."

This self-gratulation proved somewhat premature. In the course of another year or two, Sankunni Menon acquired a more correct and intimate knowledge of the character and attainments of the judges, and expressed his opinion freely in a confidential communication to the Resident. One of these judges was "honest and hard-working, an experienced revenue officer, rather timid and of little use on the bench"; another was "a clever man and a good Sanskrit scholar, but a corrupt judge;" a third, "a very poor judge and led by his more

able colleagues" ; a fourth, "one of our ablest judges, but unfortunately one of the most corrupt," and so on. It was thus evident that for real improvement in the administration of justice, a more radical change in the *personnel* was an imperative necessity.

The first thing to be done was to appoint a thoroughly competent man as the head of the judicial department. Sankunni Menon tried for many months to get such a man from the British service, but without success. He offered the place, among others, to the late Sir T. Muthuswamy Aiyer, who was then the Principal Sadr Amin of Mangalore, but he declined the offer as "his prospects there, and especially considerations of health, rendered it undesirable that he should quit the British service," and he "implored the pardon of His Highness for being unable to take up the appointment, for the gracious offer of which he must be obliged through life."* The choice

* It was Sir T. Madhava Rau, who was consulted on the subject, that suggested the name of Muthuswamy Aiyer as being by far the best man that he could think of, and also recommended the raising of the pay of the

finally fell on V. Subrahmanya Pillai, one of the earliest of our graduates in law, who was then the Zilla Judge of Alleppey in Travancore, and Sankunni Menon congratulated himself on "securing the services of one who was as well qualified for the post as most of the Principal Sadr Amins in the British service." Subrahmanya Pillai was appointed to this office towards the end of 1866 in the place of Venkatasubba Aiyer, who was transferred to the revenue department as Diwan Peishkar. Most of the other judges were gradually got rid of either by retirement or by dismissal, and were replaced by well qualified men, while the Pandit's posts were altogether abolished. At the time of Sankunni Menon's retirement, there were seven judges, of whom three were graduates in law, two were Barristers-at-law,

office to Rs. 800 per mensem. He shrewdly added, "But even for Rs. 800 Muthuswamy Aiyer's services may not be available. He may have an eye to elevation to the Bench of the High Court, as natives have been elevated in Bombay and Calcutta to such posts, and Rs. 800 cannot deviate a man having Rs. 4000 in prospect." This was early in 1866.

and the remaining two were otherwise well qualified. The aggregate pay of these judges was in his time raised from Rs. 740 to Rs. 2,800, or was nearly quadrupled.

A Regulation was passed in 1865 to provide for the appointment of qualified vakils to plead in civil courts, and another Regulation, that was passed in 1866, provided for the admission of counsel in criminal cases. A pleadership examination was held in 1866 and again in 1881 for the recruitment of qualified men for the bar. Several of the men so recruited became eminently successful and competent vakils. A knowledge of Malayalam was declared essential for enrolment as a pleader in the Cochin courts, and, if left to themselves, neither Sankunni Menon nor Subrahmanya Pillai would have interfered with this wholesome provision. When the Resident recommended the enrolment of Barrister A. G. Gover in 1868, the Diwan said, "Mr. Gover is not a pleader of the Court, and is moreover unacquainted with Malayalam. I do not think that he can be allowed to plead either in civil or criminal cases. I do not however think that

there will be any objection to his assisting the pleaders of our courts. I thought it advisable to consult the First Judge of the Appeal Court. He is also of the above opinion, as you will perceive from the enclosed." At the insistence of the Resident, however, the Diwan had eventually to agree to the modification of this provision.

It is not necessary to enter into the details of the changes made in Sankunni Menon's time in the constitution and procedure of the courts, as they are of more historical than biographical interest. They may however be briefly summarised here. Regulation 1 of 1036, which was passed in 1861, provided for the establishment of Munsiffs' courts in Ernakulam and Chittur, and subsequently one such court was established in each Taluk, and Regulation 1 of 1042 (1867) extended the powers of the Munsiffs. A regular Code of Civil Procedure was brought into force in 1864, a Limitation Regulation in 1868, a Court Fees Regulation in 1880, and a Registration Regulation in 1875. These enactments were on the lines of the corresponding Acts then in force in British India.

Regulation 1 of 1043 (1868) abolished the Circuit or Sessions Courts, and empowered the (Zilla) criminal courts to try and dispose of cases of every description, the sentences being referable to the Appeal Court for approval, if they exceeded three years' imprisonment, thirty six stripes or a fine of Rs. 200. In regard to the power of the Appeal Court, sentences subject to confirmation by His Highness the Raja were limited to those of death and imprisonment for life. The Regulation also provided that, "in awarding punishment in the exercise of their criminal jurisdiction, the Appeal Court and the Zilla Courts shall generally be guided by the penalty prescribed in the Indian Penal Code."

Of more biographical interest is Sankunni Menon's contribution to the discussion of the question of jurisdiction over European British subjects. The liability of European British subjects residing in the Native States of Travancore and Cochin to be tried by the tribunals of these States was not only not questioned in the early days of British supremacy, but was expressly admitted by the Government of India

as early as 1835. According to the rules issued by them in that year, "Europeans residing in the territories of Native States, not being servants of British Government, must be held to be in all cases, civil and criminal, subject to the law of the country in which they reside." But when an European officer in the service of Travancore was convicted of embezzlement in 1866 and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, the trial was declared to be illegal by the Madras Government according to a Proclamation of the Government of India. When, however, eminent lawyers like the late J. D. Mayne expressed their opinion that the trial was perfectly legal, the Government had to climb down and cancel their order, and allowed the sentence passed by the Travancore court to be carried out. But at the same time the Government of India considered that "the law respecting the trial of European British subjects for offences committed in Native States required some alternation in the practice which had hitherto prevailed." "His Excellency the Governor-General in Council, having regard both to the position of Her Majesty's *Paramount Power*

in India and to the *Treaty Engagements* entered into with Cochin, does not recognise the position assumed in certain discussions that have taken place, viz., that the exercise of jurisdiction over European British subjects is an inherent right possessed by the Government of Cochin." The Government accordingly proposed to delegate to the Resident for the time being in Travancore and Cochin all the powers over European British subjects that might be exercised over such subjects in British territory by a Justice of the Peace and Magistrate of the First Class. The Resident added that he would be "glad to have any remarks that might occur to His Highness's Government that might assist towards the satisfactory maturing and working in detail of the arrangement," and requested the Diwan "to bring this matter to the notice of His Highness *with every expression of high consideration*"! The Diwan replied as follows on the 16th May 1874:—

"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th ultimo, No. 250, intimating that His Excellency the Governor-General in Council has been pleased to overrule the prerogative

of jurisdiction over European British subjects which His Highness the Raja of Cochin has heretofore exercised within his territories.

“I am desired to submit with all deference a few observations which it is confidently hoped will induce the Government of India to reconsider its action on this important question. The criminal jurisdiction of the local tribunals over British subjects committing offences in this State was never called in question since the Treaty, and this right was specifically admitted and defined in a despatch from the late Honorable Court of Directors dated 1st June 1836. It does not appear from the terms of the despatch that this recognition of jurisdiction was based on mere technical difficulties in the trial of British subjects in British courts at the time; and it has certainly been always accepted and acted upon as an enlightened concession to the sovereign rights of Travancore and Cochin as Native States exercising independent civil and criminal jurisdiction within their territories.

“In a letter from the Government of India to the Government of Fort St. George dated 12th June 1837, the principle was affirmed that “Europeans residing in the territory of Native States, not being servants of the British Government, must be held to be in all respects and in all cases, civil and criminal,

subject to the law of the country in which they reside, and this rule was under the authority of the Government of Fort. St. George made applicable to European travellers and visitors equally with residents in the territory of Cochin.

“On the above principle the authorities of this country have exercised jurisdiction to the present time, and whatever may have been the case in Northern India, it has not hitherto been the practice for the Political Agent or Resident to exercise the power of trying offences committed by European or other British subjects in this State. Moreover, from the declarations made in the British Indian legislature by the Honorable Mr. Fitzjames Stephen before the passing of Act XI of 1872, I presume that it was not intended to interfere with the powers of the Native States with which fixed arrangements were in force in regard to the trial and extradition of criminals.

“If I may be permitted respectfully to refer to the Royal Proclamation of 1st November 1858, I will observe that Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to assure the Native Princes of India that all treaties or engagements made with them by or under the authority of the Honorable East India Company are accepted by Her Majesty, and will be scrupulously maintained, and that Her

Majesty will respect the rights, dignity and honour of Native Princes as her own. The free access to the country and the encouragement to settle there, which have been largely accorded to Europeans, were granted on the well understood condition that they would render obedience to the local laws and jurisdiction. By their domicile here they necessarily waived any right they might have possessed to an extraneous and exceptional jurisdiction, and elected to be judged by the tribunals of the land of their adoption. No injustice, therefore, or violation of vested rights can accrue to offenders of this class by their being dealt with by the local courts. These remarks apply with equal force to Europeans who have voluntarily engaged to take service under this Government and are actually in its employment.

“There are no doubt certain specific acts which are offences against the common law of Cochin, though not against the law of British India. In these cases, the British courts having no jurisdiction, it is admitted that the offenders, being European British subjects, might properly be brought to trial before the local courts. Analogously, there are offences which, though rendered punishable by the Indian Penal Code, are not embraced in the scheme of retributive justice in force in this country,

and these would most appropriately be taken cognizance of by the Resident, and if necessary, committed for trial to the High Court under the powers vested in him by the Government of India.

“The Government disclaims at the same time any wish to interpose its authority in the case of officers in the Civil or Military service of Her Majesty doing duty in these territories. But with regard to offences committed by all other European British subjects within this country and against laws common to it and British India, His Highness’s Government would earnestly but very deferentially deprecate the withdrawal of its long standing jurisdiction.

“Viewed purely as a question of expediency irrespective of prescriptive right or the solemn sanctions upon which the right of this Government rests, I am apprehensive that the deprivation of its old jurisdiction will prove disastrous to the ends of justice. In the event of a heinous offence occurring within the pale of Native Cochin, a charge will in the first instance have to be preferred to the British Resident, who ordinarily resides at Trivandram, and may be at the time at an inconvenient distance from the scene. Immediate action, though most essential, will not often be possible. Again, the

necessity of a committal to the High Court at Madras will, in the majority of cases, greatly militate against the successful prosecution of the offender, as native witnesses will not readily come forward to help the cause of justice, if it involves a tedious journey to the Presidency town and loss of occupation for an indefinite period. It is also to be feared that few will care to prosecute under these disadvantages.

“I may also incidentally remark that, under the local jurisdiction which is now well known to exist, offences by European British subjects are singularly rare, but they may be naturally expected to attain wider proportions and form a serious disturbing element to the peace of the community, when the authorities on the spot are shorn of power to act, and the difficulties of securing a conviction become more and more seriously realized.”

A. Seshayya Sastri, who was then the Diwan of Travancore, sent up even a more spirited protest, but it was all of no avail. The Government of India said that, so far as the principle involved was concerned, the question must be considered as closed, but they conceded that “the Sirkar and not the British

Government should appoint first class magistrates, who should be European British subjects, for the trial of all cases in which European British subjects were defendants." The Secretary of State pronounced the final benediction, and approved of the "conferring of a limited jurisdiction on certain magistrates in the States of Travancore and Cochin. It is a fitting acknowledgment of the efforts made by the rulers of these States to improve the administration of justice within their dominions." This concession has been rightly characterised by Seshayya Sastri as "only the shadow of a favour without the substance."

A subject of great importance in connection with the administration of justice—the question of appeals to His Highness from the decisions of the Appeal Court—had been under discussion and correspondence throughout Sankunni Menon's administration. In a letter to the Resident written a few months before his retirement, he dealt exhaustively with the subject, the result of which was the establishment in 1882 of that excellent institution, the Raja's Court of Appeal, which

however was ill-advisedly abolished in 1900. Sankunni Menon was of course as opposed as the Raja to the exercise by the Resident of the right of control and supervision usurped by General Cullen. So was the latter's successor Mr. F. N. Maltby, who in 1861 expressed the opinion that "His Highness as the fountain of justice might receive the complaints of persons aggrieved by the operations of his courts, and, through his responsible minister the Diwan, issue such orders as the case might call for; but that no decision of the Appeal Court should be reversed or annulled except after trial by a Commission. His Highness the Raja will, if necessary, commission the Diwan and two or more other suitable persons to hear the appeal and report to His Highness whether in their opinion there is sufficient cause for declaring the decision of the court erroneous and altering the decision. Should this appear to be so, His Highness will with the advice of the Resident issue a formal order to that effect. If, on perusal of the proceedings of the Appeal Court, His Highness is satisfied that the case

has been fairly and judiciously disposed of, he should decline to interfere with the ordinary course of justice, and have the petition endorsed to that effect by the Diwan.

“Special appeals from the decisions of the Appeal Court having been thus recognized, a special provision was introduced, at the particular request of His Highness the late Raja and with the consent of the Resident, into the Cochin Civil Procedure Code for the presentation of such appeals to His Highness.

“The course recommended by Mr. Maltby was no doubt the best adapted for the hearing and disposal of such special appeals, but there was one great difficulty in following it, viz., that of finding duly qualified persons to sit on the commission with the Diwan for hearing such appeals. Since the date of the above suggestions, His Highness's Government had greatly raised the position of the judges and obtained for the bench the services of men of greater intelligence, education and probity than those who then filled it. I was therefore desirous that the members of the commission should not be behind the judges in any of the said qualifications, but found it no easy task to procure the services of such men.

“The difficulty was brought to the notice of the then Acting Resident in 1870. Mr. Minchin recommended that the appeal should be heard by the Diwan and, if he concurred in the propriety of the decree passed by the Appeal Court, His Highness should confirm it. If the Diwan was of opinion that the decree should be reversed or modified, he should record his reasons to that effect. His opinion should then be returned to the Appeal Court for any observations the judges might wish to make, and should be forwarded with those observations for the consideration of the Resident. Upon the advice of the Resident, His Highness would pass final orders on the matter. The Madras Government however doubted the expediency of the system recommended by Mr. Minchin on the ground of the Resident thereby taking too active a part in the administration of justice in the Cochin State. In forwarding this order of Government* the Acting

* “*2nd February 1871* — Visited His Highness in the evening. He asked me to see particularly that none of his prerogatives were taken away from him. This was said in reference to the G. O. regarding appeals to His Highness.” “*4th idem.* — Paid my respects to His Highness, who is very anxious to know how the question of special appeals will terminate, and was for an hour or so endeavouring to make me commit myself by giving a decided opinion. This, avoided.”

Resident expressed his opinion that the only alternative course by which all interference on the part of the Resident would be rendered unnecessary would be the appointment of a special judicial officer of high character and great judicial knowledge to be constituted adviser of His Highness in judicial matters, and called for an early expression of my views and the opinion of the judges of the Appeal Court on the subject. I was unable to recommend the appointment of a special judicial officer possessing the qualifications specified in Mr. Minchin's letter owing to the great extra expense which such a course would entail upon this Government. On the 25th September last you asked whether a course similar to that adopted in Travancore would be agreeable to His Highness and beneficial to the public, namely, that the disposal of these appeals be handed over to any two of the judges of the Sudr Court who had not been engaged in the disposal of the original suits. His Highness would, I thought, be unwilling to have such cases decided by the judges of the Appeal Court independently of himself, although he would in all probability have no objection to the cases being heard by the judges and their opinion being submitted for the confirmation of His Highness. There was moreover another difficulty in this course arising from our Appeal

Court being composed of only three judges, and cases on their file being generally heard and disposed of by a full bench, so that the services of two judges, who have not been engaged in the disposal of the regular appeals, would not be available for the disposal of the special appeals, excepting of course such special appeals as have been preferred from decisions passed before some of the present judges of the Appeal Court came into office.

“If two or more duly qualified individuals can be found to form with the Diwan a Judicial Committee for hearing such appeals and submitting their opinion for the confirmation of His Highness, the Resident’s interference, to which the Government objected, can probably be dispensed with.”

The outcome of this protracted discussion was the constitution of His Highness the Raja’s Court of Appeal. Appeals against the decisions of the Zilla judges in suits above a certain value were to be heard and disposed of by a single judge of the Appeal Court, against whose decision an appeal lay to the Raja’s Court, which was generally to be heard by the other two judges of the Appeal Court, the Diwan having, in cases in which the Sirkar was not a party, the power to direct the appeal to

be heard by the two judges in association with himself. The decisions of the Raja's Court were to be submitted through the Diwan to His Highness for confirmation, and they could be pronounced only after they were thus confirmed. The inherent power of His Highness as the supreme judge was thus upheld in theory, but its exercise was discontinued in practice.

Sankunni Menon was quite alive to the importance of maintaining good relations between the executive and the judiciary, and had always been anxious to be on cordial terms with the judges. But he was not uniformly successful in doing so. If the old judges were subservient to the Diwan, the new ones asserted their independence with a vengeance. They were, like their *confreres* elsewhere, rightly jealous of their dignity and independence, but at times they asserted it in extra-judicial matters. Sankunni Menon, however, was the least pugnacious of men, and always disposed to show forbearance, and it was only when his own authority was flouted that he was reluctantly compelled to assert himself. Soon after

Mr. D'Albedyhll was appointed second judge in 1861, for instance, he made "a somewhat peremptory and in my opinion a rather unreasonable demand upon me to change the style of address used by the Diwans in their communications to the Appeal Court. At first I was inclined to resent, but as all disputes between the minister and the highest judicial tribunal were to be avoided, if possible, and as I was convinced that Mr. D'Albedyhll was actuated by some mistaken notion of duty and not by any other feeling, I resolved to meet his wishes to a certain extent, and we have thus come to an amicable settlement, to the disappointment, I fear, of a few who would have been glad to see the breach wider."

Some years later the Diwan found it necessary to animadvert upon certain actions of the judges of the Appeal Court. The following extracts from a demi-official communication, which he addressed to the Resident in September 1870, will explain their nature:—

"I have not the slightest intention of interfering with the independence of the judges in judicial mat-

ters. On the contrary, I have, as far as lay in my power, always supported them in the assertion of such independence. But when the judges under the plea of independence absent themselves from their station without leave, try to avoid reporting their absence when called upon to do so, fail to render account of public money received by them, and treat the highest officer of the State with studied discourtesy, it is in my opinion high time to tell them that they are wrong and that such conduct will not be tolerated.

“During the last adjournment of the courts the First Judge of the Appeal Court proceeded to Madras, and did not return to his station for several days after the re-opening of the court. He used to do the same on previous occasions also, but he usually wrote to me, asking me to obtain leave of absence from His Highness. On the last occasion, however, he dispensed with this formality, and when His Highness heard that he had been absent without leave, he directed me to call upon him for explanation. I recommended that no notice should be taken of what was past, but that in order to prevent such action in future, a statement showing the absence of public servants should be called for not only from the courts but from every department of the State. His Highness agreed to this, and instructions were accordingly issued for the submission of the statement now complained of The statement was called for under the orders of His

Highness. I could have called for it myself, and if I had done so, there would have been no difficulty in the matter. But I was aware of the petty jealousy which the Judges of the Appeal Court entertain towards the Diwan, and in order to give them no cause of complaint, I had taken care to mention in my first communication that the information was called for under the orders of His Highness. It will be humiliating to His Highness to allow the Appeal Court to disregard the instructions sent to them under his orders, and I fear he will not consent to it. If the Appeal Court report all previous absence in the prescribed form and then suggest any alteration in the form, His Highness will readily agree to it, and in future the absence of the judges can be reported by letter as suggested by you. This is the course I recommended in my official letter to you, and I believe it is the proper course and the only satisfactory way of getting out of the difficulty.

“In conclusion, I beg to thank you for your kind advice, and to assure you that I am fully alive to the importance of a good understanding between myself and the Appeal Court and that I do my best to avoid a quarrel. But sometimes the conduct of the judges is so provoking that I cannot help taking notice of it. I will tell you of another matter now in dispute between us. At the last examination of candidates for vakilship, each candidate was required to pay a fee

with his application, and a sum of seven or eight hundred rupees was thus collected. This sum should at once have been paid into the treasury, deducting any sum expended on stationery, &c. The judges did not do so for months, and I wrote to them requesting that they would render an account of the receipts and disbursements, and pay the balance into the treasury. Sometimes afterwards I wrote to them again, but they have not only neglected to comply with my request, but have treated by communication with contempt, not deigning even to send a reply”

The Resident Mr. Minchin observed that the judges had been wrong on more than one occasion. “But, as I wrote to you before,” he said, “jealousy of any interference with their independence is so proper a feeling on their part—a feeling held by and fostered in all English judges everywhere—that we ought to treat it with the greatest consideration. Of course, judges must instantly obey their sovereign, from whom their authority flows, and knowing that the statement was called for under His Highness’s orders, the judges ought to have submitted it at once. At the same time, I cannot but impress upon you the advisability of bringing the royal authority to

bear upon the judges as little as possible.....
.... I am astonished at the judges' not having immediately supplied the account that was called for As the judges undertook the collection, they should have accounted for it at once. With the exalted notion I entertain of the independence of a judge's office, I shall be deeply mortified, if the judges of your State, by any misconduct of their own, lower their position."

A more serious controversy arose between the Diwan and the judges in 1877. The correspondence relating to it was carried on officially, and most of it unfortunately found its way into the public press. It arose in connection with the conduct of a Tahsildar in a *dakaiti* case, into the details of which it is not necessary to enter for the present purpose. The law governing criminal procedure at this time was defective, antiquated and in some ways even absurd, but none the less it was the law of the country. Stripped of all non-essentials, the contention of the judges was based on law as it should be, while the Diwan's justification was based on law as it

was. The correspondence became voluminous, and somewhat accrimonious on the part of the judges. The latter indulged in personal attacks on the Diwan. The First and Second Judges, Messrs. V. Subrahmanya Pillai and W. E. Clarke, so far forgot themselves as to say that "the *judges* had no relations or dependents to be affected by the Diwan's order." Again, "the hostility of the Diwan having been once excited against the Appeal Court, he is not likely to allow it to subside. His action throughout this unfortunate correspondence shows that he is bent on asserting his authority with an iron hand, and that the Appeal Court must either bow to it or be crushed." Sankunni Menon defended himself in a long, dignified and masterly memorandum, the concluding portion of which is given below, it being far too long to be quoted *in extenso*, though the whole of it is well worth perusal.

"Not satisfied with having had a portion of the joint memo to himself, the retiring Second Judge has thought proper to record a separate memo, repeating the charges of hostility on the part of the Diwan towards the judges, complaining of his serious

interference with the rights and powers of the courts, and expressing views, which are tantamount to a wish that the judges of the Appeal Court should be relieved of all control and supervision. Portions of the joint memo also seem to have these objects in view. I may with greater justice say that some of the judges of the Appeal Court have for some time past been uniformly hostile towards the government which they profess to serve, and that they have often seriously encroached upon the rights and powers of the Diwan. If I don't here enlarge upon this subject, it is from the fear of this letter becoming exceedingly long and also because of the subject being not necessarily connected with the points now under consideration.

“To me personally it is of little consequence whether the supervision which has all along been exercised by the Diwans over the judicial department is continued or not, as it is very unlikely that I shall remain much longer in office to enjoy the pleasure of crushing the Appeal Court with an iron hand, but I shall be wanting in my duty to the country of which I am a subject and a high officer, if I do not leave on record my deliberate opinion that the judges of the Appeal Court do occasionally require looking after, and that the day on which al

supervision is taken away will be an evil day to the Cochin State.

“I have known the time when some at least of the judges of the country were corrupt and servile, and most of them were incompetent. These objections do not refer to the judges now in office, and I take an honest pride in having had some share in bringing about so desirable a change. But the present judges are mostly foreigners not well acquainted with our peculiar manners, customs and institutions, for which they entertain, to say the least, no great respect. Their training, which is very good in its way, has not made them well acquainted with the laws of this country, and where they see a difference between our laws and the laws in which they have been trained, they think it right to administer the latter and perhaps the more correct law without receiving any special authority for making the change. If some of the former judges have been servile, the present judges show a tendency to go to the other extreme of self assertion and over-stepping their legitimate bounds. It is in these respects that the present judges require supervision.

“I perfectly agree in the proposition that the judges should be independent. What I understand by independence however is non-liability to be interfered with in the lawful conduct of any judicial

proceeding or in the passing of their sentence and order. No one should dictate to them how a case on their file should be investigated or what decisions should be passed thereon. But if independence means full liberty on the part of the judges to set aside the laws of the country or custom long established having the force of law, to introduce foreign laws and rulings at their discretion, to encroach upon the rights and powers of other departments, to do as they like with funds received by them in their official capacity and that no one should take any notice of such vagaries, then I am decidedly against the judges being allowed such independence."

Before these papers were submitted to His Highness for orders, the whole correspondence and the records of the case were placed before the Resident, Mr. H. E. Sullivan, for his opinion and advice. In an able memorandum he reviewed the case and dealt exhaustively with all the points at issue. He upheld the Diwan's contention on all points, and concluded thus:—

"It only remains for me now to notice, and I do so with deep regret, the very improper tone which characterized the remarks of the First and (late) Second Judges in this unfortunate controversy.

At the outset they took a mistaken view of their powers under the existing law, and because the Diwan demurred to their procedure, they have, I regret to say, made a public attack upon him of an utterly unjustifiable character. They charge him with manifesting 'hostility towards the Appeal Court,' which 'hostility has caused a lamentable miscarriage of justice,' with having 'hampered the administration of justice and impugned the action of its administrators,' whilst other expressions, remarks and insinuations are freely indulged in, which should never have found a place in any official document, and, least of all, in communications addressed by the judges of the Chief Court to the head of the administration. In this respect the Third Judge contrasts very favourably with his colleagues. Whilst fully and unreservedly stating his view of the case, which is in the main the same as that entertained by the other judges, his minutes are couched in courteous official phraseology, alike befitting the dignity of the bench and the high rank of the official to whom they were addressed. As the matter has been referred to me for my opinion, I should be wanting in my duty if I did not advise His Highness to take serious notice of the improper manner adopted by the First and (late) Second Judges of the Appeal Court towards

the minister in this unfortunate affair. In the assertion of their judicial independence and in the maintenance of their legal rights I would have strenuously supported them, and I have stated above my opinion that the existing law defining the jurisdiction of the courts is defective and requires amendment, but the action they have seen fit to take in the matter cannot be defended, indeed it might almost be used as an argument against the expediency of extending their powers. The Second Judge has retired from the service of the Cochin State since the memoranda referred to in this paper were penned; but the First Judge still retains his high office. In directing the committal of the Talapilli Tahsildar for trial, I give him and his colleagues the credit of being actuated solely by a sense of public duty, and I am not prepared to say that the view they took of that official's conduct was without foundation. Up to this point the rules of official propriety had not been violated; but there can be no question that in the controversy which ensued the First and Second Judges showed themselves lacking in discretion and judicial calmness, whilst zeal for the public interests became strongly tinged with personal animus. The result has been a great scandal, and the conflict between the two chief departments of the State has been the subject

of public gossip throughout His Highness's territories. To heal this breach, to prevent the possibility of a recurrence of such unseemly altercations and to bury the past in oblivion are the objects now to be secured. When private disputes are referred to an arbitrator, he decides that the person proved to be in the wrong should make amends to his quondam opponent. In this case I am of opinion that the First Judge has in the heat of controversy allowed his personal feelings to get the better of him, and under this influence has used expressions with reference to the Diwan which on reflection he must see cause to regret. But there they stand on on the public record, and unless they are withdrawn, it is impossible for the two departments to co-operate. I therefore advise His Highness to insist on the First Judge V. Subrahmanya Pillai withdrawing the imputations made against the Diwan in the correspondence under notice and apologising to that officer for his share in the matter. Had he not resigned his office, I should have recommended the same course being adopted in regard to Mr. W. E. Clarke the late Second Judge."

His Highness fully agreed with the Resident, and issued orders accordingly. What happened next is briefly told in Sankunni

Menon's diary. "*7th March 1878.*—Subrahmanya Pillai sent an official letter recalling all imputations and tendering an apology, and a private note expressing his regret, &c., Sent a private note to S. Pillai, saying I was more sorry for the angry public correspondence than elated by its result, expressing the hope that in future we shall be more forbearing and less ready to take up the cudgels, and asking him to overlook any unpleasant language I may have used in my correspondence." Subrahmanya Pillai called upon the Diwan the next evening: they shook hands and, like the honourable men that they were, let the dead past bury its dead.

CHAPTER V.
SANKUNNI MENON
AND
THE ELAYA RAJA.

By no means be persuaded to interpose yourself, either by word or letter, in any cause depending in a court of justice, nor suffer any great man to do it when you can hinder it. If it should prevail, it prevents justice; but if the judge is so just and of such courage as he ought to be, as not to be inclined thereby, yet it always leaves a taint of suspicion behind it. — BACON.

In 1867, an event took place, which deserves to be noticed here in some detail for the reason, among others, that it caused Sankunni Menon considerable distress of mind, but no repentance, for almost the rest of his life. It created a rupture between him and the heir apparent, which was never completely healed. The circumstances connected with it may be explained in his own words:—

“By a *Titturam* (royal writ) granted in 950 M. E. 1775 A. D.), the Paliyat Achan was appointed *Koyma* (representative) of the Raja in the village of

Kuzhur and *Samudayam* (manager) of the pagoda there, and he was allowed to take and enjoy all the receipts of the village and of the pagoda, and the Paliyat Achan appears ever since to have been in the management of the affairs of the pagoda. There were also some Namburi Brahmans who, as *Uralars* (trustees) of the pagoda, appear to have had some voice in the management of the pagoda affairs.

“The respective powers of the two parties do not appear to have been well defined, but there was harmony between them till the year 1865. In November of that year, a misunderstanding arose between the Paliyat Achan and the *Uralars* in consequence of the former having appointed as the pagoda agent (*Pattamali*) a Brahman who was obnoxious to the latter, and both parties claimed possession of the pagoda and of all the property belonging thereto. After due enquiry, it was decided that the *Uralars* should recognise the *Pattamali* appointed by the Paliyat Achan, as they appear to have done on former occasions and that the *Pattamali* should manage the affairs of the pagoda.

“If the *Uralars* were dissatisfied with the above decision, they should have filed a suit to establish their claim. But, instead of doing so, they or some of them transferred their rights to His Highness the Elaya Raja, intending, I believe, only to use His

Highness's name and influence in obtaining possession of the pagoda and of all its property. His Highness, who is very young and inexperienced, accepted their offer, and, under the evil advice of designing individuals, attempted to interfere with the management of the pagoda affairs during *utsavam* in 1042 M. E., and some months afterwards tried to collect the rents due to the pagoda, and obtained possession of some pagoda property and records. On both these occasions I directed the Tahsildar to prevent any interference on the part of His Highness's people, as I could not allow the decision already passed in the matter to be set at nought, as I considered it to be binding on His Highness as it was on the *Uralars* from whom he derived his right. This year, at the time of the *utsavam*, or annual festival, His Highness the Elaya Raja again repaired to the Kuzhur pagoda, and, on the seventh day of the festival, His Highness, against the wishes of the officers of the pagoda, directed that the daily procession should be extended to a short distance outside the pagoda enclosure, and a short but disgraceful affray between his followers and those of the Paliyat Achan was the result.

"It is very much to be regretted that His Highness the Elaya Raja cannot be persuaded to refrain from lending his name to such unlawful and

improper acts. Parameswara Aiyer, who was the Palace Sarvadhikaryakar in the time of the late Raja, is a notoriously corrupt and intriguing person, as will be seen from the records of your own (Resident's) office. Unfortunately, this man possesses great influence over His Highness the Elaya Raja, and it is through his advice that His Highness interferes in such matters, and His Highness's own manager, Muttad Karyakar, who is an ignorant and worthless man, joins Parameswara Aiyer in giving him bad advice. I fear no good can be expected until these persons are expelled from Tripunittura.

“In conclusion, I must add that the taking up of the idol a short distance out of the pagoda enclosures on what is called *Pallinayat*, or hunting excursion, is a practice which obtains in several pagodas, that the following of this practice in the Kuzhur pagoda could have done no harm, and that it was actually done last year by the orders of His Highness the Elaya Raja. Under these circumstances, I am of opinion that it was incumbent on the Paliyat Achan, in consideration of His Highness's position, youth and inexperience, to have allowed the procession to take place if His Highness was very anxious about it. I am sorry, however, to say that the Paliyat Achan or his followers showed no such forbearance.”

This affray was in fact a serious riot between the followers of the heir apparent to the *masnad* and the premier nobleman of the State, and naturally created a great sensation throughout the State. It is no exaggeration to say that the whole State was divided into two excited parties; highly coloured accounts of the incident were published in the newspapers; and representations of various kinds were made to the Resident and the Madras Government. Perhaps, the only individuals who kept cool heads on their shoulders at this juncture were the two most responsible men in the State, the Raja and the Diwan. The latter tried his best to bring about an amicable settlement of the dispute through the good offices of the former. It was with great reluctance and only after repeated references from the Resident that the Diwan sent the report from which the above passages have been extracted. Before sending it he wrote demi-officially, "A report regarding the Kuzhur dispute was prepared and signed by me some days ago; but, as I was very anxious to avoid placing on record anything against His Highness the Elaya Raja, and as I

had some hopes of bringing about an amicable settlement, the letter was not dispatched at the time. The Paliyat Achan was quite willing to come to such arrangement, and His Highness the Elaya Raja has promised to make known his resolution in a day or two. I trust that you will therefore excuse a further delay of two or three days". Four days later, he said, "His Highness the Elaya Raja has not come to any decision regarding the settlement of his dispute with the Paliyat Achan." Sankunni Menon dispatched the report accordingly on the 4th February 1868, and at the same time allowed the Elaya Raja to peruse a copy of the same.

The magisterial enquiry was entrusted to the Diwan Peishkar, Venkatasubba Aiyer, an honest and good-natured officer, but weak and vacillating. He experienced many difficulties in conducting the enquiry. The accused and the witnesses belonging to the Elaya Raja's entourage did not always turn up when summoned, and sometimes, when they put in an appearance, they treated the Peishkar with studied insolence. That officer was not cut out to play the part of Judge Gascoigne. It

was however a dangerous part to play in those days, as he had all the members of the royal family to reckon with, for, whatever might have been their opinion about the Elaya Raja's ill-advised action, the insult offered to the heir apparent over-shadowed all other considerations. The Diwan Peishkar fortunately happened to be a *persona grata* with the Elaya Raja, and was thus able to complete the enquiry after many delays and interruptions. In August, the accused on both sides were committed to the criminal court, which then consisted of two judges, C. Tiruvenkatachari and G. H. Gunther.

While the enquiry was going on, the Resident, Mr. Newill, who showed himself to be as anxious as the Raja and the Diwan to check the scandal, addressed a letter of advice and remonstrance to the Elaya Raja, in which, after stating the case as he understood it, he said :—

“I must freely point out to your Highness that this was a most injudicious act on your part, and one the legality of which is more than questionable, since it ignores the rights of the Paliyat Achan, which had

been unquestioned till the time of the dispute. Your Highness too, by adopting this unwise course, has placed yourself in the same position as His Highness the Raja's subjects, and become liable to the humiliation of being defeated in a judicial action in the courts. The least that Your Highness should have done in a case of a palpable dispute of the kind, and in which it was evident to most persons that the object was to obtain the might of your influence in favour of one of the disputant parties, was for you to act under the advice of His Highness the Raja after a full enquiry into the matter by the Diwan; and, had there been no objection on the ground above mentioned, the expediency of your Highness undertaking an independent charge of such matters with your present inexperience would still have been very questionable.

"I would caution your Highness against being led, as you unfortunately seem to have been, by Parameswara Aiyer, who, as appears from the records of my office, is a most intriguing character and altogether unworthy of your confidence; and your Manager Muttad Karyakar has had an equal share in the ill advice given to you. I would strongly urge upon Your Highness the advisability of compromising this unfortunate dispute for your own credit and dignity, and thus avoiding the further humiliation of being dragged into the courts of the country."

The Resident wrote to His Highness the Raja also, enclosing a copy of the above letter. What happened next is told in Sankunni Menon's diary:—

5th January.— Saw His Highness this morning. He resolves to write to his brother that the case must be settled, and ask him to come to Tripunittura, where he intends speaking to him on the subject in the presence of their mother. He is not however without misgivings regarding the results of his letter and conversation, as he is afraid the Elaya Raja will insist on going on with the dispute against his wishes.

14th February.— His Highness says that himself and mother tried their best to bring about an amicable settlement of the Kuzhur dispute, but that the Elaya Raja would not agree to it. All that he would promise was that he would not interfere with the management of the affairs of the pagoda. He intends to bring a civil suit, and to animadvert on the charge brought against him of being led by the late Sarvadhi.'

The Diwan wrote to the Resident accordingly. On the 4th March the Governor of Madras arrived in Cochin, and spent five days in the State. Sankunni Menon had several private interviews with His Excellency.

"6th March— Then we sat down, the Governor, the Resident and myself, and the former expressed his regret at the dispute between the Elaya Raja and Paliyat Achan, stated the case as he understood it, said that there should be no compromise, but that the Elaya Raja should simply write to the *Uralars*, saying that he would have nothing to do with the pagoda; that from the Elaya Raja's position a decision for him would not prove satisfactory to the public, and if a decree was passed against him, the Elaya Raja would for life be the enemy of the judge who passed it. He wished his sentiments to be made known to His Highness, but as my taking a message would probably draw down upon me the displeasure of the Elaya Raja, he would rather write to His Highness. Lord Napier told me also to go on with the school works and other improvements, and not to be afraid. The Paliyat Achan came in soon afterwards, and was very kindly received, and when he went away, Lord Napier said that he was a nice old man."

As soon as he reached Madras, Lord Napier wrote to thank His Highness for his hospitality, and added:—"I cannot but regret that the Elaya Raja accepted the claims or rights which were offered to him. I think that

His Highness would have done wisely, if he had declined them, and declined to be made a party in the transaction in which he originally had no interest or concern. It seems to me that the Elaya Raja might still withdraw from the dispute and return the above titles or claims of which they divested themselves in His Highness's favour. His Highness is a young Prince of an intelligent and amiable character, and I make no doubt that he is a dutiful subject of your Highness and an attached brother. He would recognise the justice of Your Highness's orders, should they be given in the sense I have expressed. It is most desirable for the dignity and peace of Your Highness's family and for the good relations which ought to prevail between the Elaya Raja and the Diwan and the Judges of Your Highness's territory that your Highness's brother should not be mixed up in public transactions and contentions, and it would be more easy to arrest matters at this mement than later." The Elaya Raja agreed to abide by His Excellency's advice to the extent of "not taking any legal measures for the establishment

of his claim. He seems however to be of opinion that it will be derogatory to his dignity to be obliged to give back to the *Uralars* the documents which he received from them." A reply was sent to the Governor accordingly.

"19th May.—A letter from the Resident enclosing one from Lord Napier to the address of His Highness. It expresses His Lordship's satisfaction on hearing that the Elaya Raja had resolved not to interfere in the Kuzhur pagoda affairs and not to take any legal steps for establishing the claim derived from the *Uralars*. The satisfaction appears to be limited, as the Resident says that he is coming here to arrange matters."

27th May.—(Interview between the Raja and the Resident). His Highness came at about 5 P. M. The Resident unusually cordial. The Governor's manners seem to have improved his own. A long talk about the Elaya Raja. Mr. Newill says that, should he (the Elaya Raja) do anything contrary to his recent determination, it should be communicated to him, and adds that Government would not in that case recognise him as Elaya Raja, and would not allow him to succeed to the *masnad*."

This serious warning led the Maharaja to press the Diwan to take steps to send

Parameswara Aiyer from Tripunittura, as His Highness was of opinion that, if he continued to remain there, he would lead the Elaya Raja to fresh indiscretions. The Diwan accordingly wrote to the Resident on the subject, and suggested his deportation "to one of the northern districts, or to Chittur, where he is possessed of some landed property. The bad character Parameswara Aiyer bears and his interference in matters which do not concern him render it necessary that His Highness's wishes should be complied with." The Resident expressed his "entire concurrence in this most judicious step" of deporting "this intriguing and worthless character with a view to removing his evil influence upon His Highness the Elaya Raja." On the 18th June he was quietly arrested and taken to Chittur, and orders were issued to the Tahsildar to see that he did not leave that Taluk until further orders. The deportation was carried out so quietly that even the Elaya Raja did not know for several days what his destination was.

18th June.— I am glad that the thing was managed so quietly. I was afraid that he would kick

up a row, that he would ask the Elaya Raja to rescue him, and thus give him pain and trouble.

'19th Jue.— His Highness the Raja is very glad that Parameswara Aiyer was deported to Chittur.

28th June.— Received a letter from His Highness saying that his mother paid him a visit and expressed greatly gratified by the deportation of P. A., which, she thinks, will lead to pacify the Elaya Raja also.

The trial of the accused in the criminal court began in October, and was dragged on for weeks. It was generally surmised at the time that, in view of the indifferent health of the Maharaja, Tiruvenkatachâri would make a desperate bid for the Elaya Raja's favour. Let Sankunni Menon tell the story :—

"13th December.— The Kuzhur case is getting on slowly—half a witness per diem. The Pa'iyat party seem to think that the First Judge is intentionally protracting the case in order that it may be decided on the 23rd evening when, if the defendants are ironed, there will be no remedy till the courts reopen after the Christmas holidays.

"18th December.— The Zilla First Judge stops proceedings because Kochukrishna Menon* did not

* Kochukrishna Menon was the son of a former head of the Paliyat family, and was then the chief

attend. His attendance is quite unnecessary, as the agent was present in his place. The report is that the judge is afraid that he would abscond on the last day, and thus deprive him of the pleasure of putting him in irons. I hope there is no truth in this report, as it would bring a stigma on the whole judicial administration of the country.

"19th December.— The case is decided. The Second Judge acquitted both the Palace and Paliyat servants, but the First Judge acquitted the Palace people, convicted nine out of the ten defendants in the counter charge, and sentenced them to various periods of imprisonment, that of Kochukrishna Menon extending to three years, the full period which he could award. Some of the prisoners were sentenced to receive lashes in addition. The vakil and Mr. Gover represented that they were about to appeal, and requested that the execution of the sentence might be suspended. The First Judge gave a few minutes' time; but, as soon as he returned from his tiffin, he ordered the prisoners to be ironed; and although Mr. Gover represented that the Appeal Court had admitted the appeal and that an order was being prepared for staying execution, he would not hear of it, and Kochukrishna Menon and three or

manager of their estate. A highly respectable man, who was well known to have been nowhere in the affray.

four others were actually ironed. The others were taken to the flogging post, and, notwithstanding the remonstrance of Mr. Gover and the verbal order transmitted through the Nazir by the Appeal Court, he ordered them to be led to the post, and would have flogged them, if Mr. Gunther had not called his attention to the grave responsibility he was incurring, and the written order of the court had not reached him immediately afterwards. When the Appeal Court ordered sentence to be stayed, the First Judge, instead of ordering the irons to be struck off, directed them to be brought before the court, thus parading them in irons before the populace. He is said to have sent peon after peon to the jail to see that the prisoners were ironed without loss of time. Subsequently, he would not be satisfied with the respectability of the parties who appeared as bail, and although Parayi, the richest man in Travancore and Cochin, was produced, his bail was declared to be insufficient, and thus the prisoners were doomed to imprisonment till Monday. The Paliyat people managed to collect Rs. 5,000, the amount of bail required from Kochukrishna Menon, but by this time the judge had left the court. The sentence itself was bad enough, but such glaringly indecent proceedings as the above show the animus of the man, and that he was determined to dishonour the accused at any cost. Indeed, he is said to have brought his

decision ready written when he came to court, and to have paid little or no attention to the address of the prisoners' vakil. Mr. Gover went to the jail to sympathise with and encourage K. Menon, but he was showed out, although many other persons were allowed to remain. Gunther paid me a visit in the evening, and verified most of the above statements. It made me sick to hear of these proceedings. B. A. and B. L. are no guarantees of integrity and honesty, I am sorry to perceive."

"20th December.— Mr. Gover paid me a visit this morning, and said that he was quite disgusted with the First Judge's proceedings yesterday, and that he was going to Trivandram to see the Resident. ... All the female members of the Royal family appear to have been under the impression that it was I that ordered the prisoners to be bailed, and they were all gathered together last evening and abusing me to their heart's content. When they subsequently heard that it was the Appeal Court that had issued the orders, they insisted on its being done under my instigation.

"21st December.— The First Judge's sentence consists of half a dozen sentences, saying that he convicts and sentences. ... He is reported to have visited the Elaya Raja on Friday, the day previous to the sentence."

The prisoners were released on bail on the 21st. On the 19th, Mr. Gover sent a long telegram to the Resident, and followed it up with an elaborate memorial animadverting upon these proceedings. In the latter he complained of Palace influence being brought to bear upon the judges, and accused the Diwan of abetting this irregularity. This is what the Diwan had to say on the subject :—

“I cannot say that irregularities have not occurred in the trials alluded to, but I am perfectly sure that no Palace influence has been exerted in the matter, if by *Palace influence* is meant the influence of His Highness the Raja. His Highness was so very anxious that a word of his should not be misconstrued into a desire on his part that the cases should be decided in favour of any particular party, that he has discouraged the visits of the judges to his Palace pending the disposal of the cases, and when he met them, he avoided all allusion to the subject. A communication was received from the Palace after the cases were disposed of, but Mr. Gover has misapprehended the tenor of that communication. I have no objection to give you all the particulars privately, although I do not intend to allude to the subject in my official communication.

as I do not consider Mr. Gover was justified in alluding or objecting to any communication which might have taken place between His Highness and his Diwan, so long as no order was issued to the Appeal Court detrimental to the interests of his clients. ... The following are the facts of the case. The trials were concluded and sentence passed on a Saturday. The same day the Appeal Court ordered the prisoners to be released on bail. The next day—Sunday—His Highness the Elaya Raja called upon His Highness the Raja, and represented that the Paliyat Achan was anxious that his servants should not undergo the sentence passed upon them by the Zilla Court; that, as the Achan was a rich man, he would have no hesitation in forfeiting the penalty, and that, if the prisoners were released on bail as directed by the Appeal Court, they would not be forthcoming, should the Appeal Court confirm the sentence of the lower court. The Elaya Raja therefore asked His Highness to send an order direct that the prisoners should be kept in simple imprisonment pending the disposal of the appeal. His Highness the Raja at once declined to order their imprisonment, but he ultimately agreed to direct me to communicate the circumstances to the Appeal Court and to ask them to take such steps as they might deem necessary for securing the attendance of

the prisoners when the appeal was disposed of. Soon afterwards, I paid His Highness my usual Sunday visit, when His Highness told me all the particulars above mentioned. I informed His Highness that the amount deposited by the prisoners was 13,000 rupees, a sum which even the Paliyat Achan would be careful not to throw away, and that, even if the prisoners by absconding forfeited the above large amount, their property would be liable to attachment and sale, and that the prisoners themselves would be apprehended whenever and wherever they might be found, and obliged to undergo the punishment awarded them. There was therefore no fear of the prisoners running away ; and I told His Highness moreover that, under the peculiar circumstances of these case, any order from His Highness to the Appeal Court would be inadvisable. His Highness was then convinced that the bail demanded was ample to secure the attendance of the prisoners and that it would be advisable for him not to interfere in any way in this case, but as he had promised the Elaya Raja to write to me on the subject, and as the proposed communication merely asked the Appeal Court to take such steps as they might deem proper, he said that he would order a communication to be addressed to me and that I could send him a reply, showing that such an order

to the Appeal Court was unnecessary and inadvisable. At about half way between this and Tripunitura one of the Palace peons overtook me and gave me the Sarvadhikaryakar's letter. The peon followed me for a reply which I gave him the same afternoon."

After the Christmas holidays, the Appeal Court disposed of the appeals, acquitting Kochukrishna Menon and two others and reducing the sentence of the others. Mr. Ballard, who now succeeded Mr. Newill as Resident, on going through the records of the case and perusing the Diwan's memorandum on the subject, was "induced to recommend for the consideration of His Highness the Raja that His Highness should be pleased, in the exercise of his prerogative, to extend a free pardon to the prisoners under fine and imprisonment." He had little or no doubt that these men were engaged in the affray, but he had as little that many of the others charged in the cross cases but acquitted were also more or less concerned in the disturbances. As regards the conduct of the Judge he said: "I am constrained with much regret to say that I consider that there is too much room for suspicion to prevail from the very indiscreet conduct of the First Judge

of the Zilla Court. That functionary's attempt at explanation appears to be very unsatisfactory, and I beg to submit for the serious consideration of His Highness the Raja whether a judge, who could act so indiscreetly, when the consequence of indiscretion cast grave aspersion on the pure and impartial administration of justice in His Highness's courts of law, should be allowed to retain the position he fills. It is from an earnest desire to assist to maintain, as far as lies in my power, the high character of the courts of Cochin and the administration of His Highness that I must press this subject on His Highness's notice." In a demi-official letter, Mr. Ballard said: "Perhaps His Highness may see fit to remove him to some other court, if not to take still stronger measures." "I am glad to say," the Diwan replied, "that His Highness readily granted a free pardon to the prisoners above mentioned and directed the transfer of Tiruvenkatachàri to the Trichur Zilla Court. The prisoners were released on the 12th instant (April 1869), and the fines have also been directed to be repaid to them."

Mr. Ballard thus concluded his official letter:—"And I cannot resist saying that your conduct in this difficult matter seems to me to have been consistent throughout with the very high character for straightforward integrity which I have always heard assigned to you."

It only remains to be added that, since this dispute began, the Elaya Raja never gave audience to the Diwan or had any personal intercourse with him. "When going up to Tripunitura," to quote only one of the many entries in Sankunni Menon's diary, "I saw His Highness the Elaya Raja out riding. He looked straight forward to avoid seeing my contumacious face". Mutual friends tried to effect a reconciliation between His Highness and the Diwan. The latter told them that he was anxious "to pay his respects to His Highness and to be reconciled," but, as he had not done anything wrong, he would "make no apology or any admission of irregularity" in his proceedings. There the matter rested. As he grew older, however, the Elaya Raja began to appreciate the worth of Sankunni Menon and his work, and when the latter retired, His Highness told a mutual

friend that there would not be another Diwan like Sankunni Menon and that he would like to see him re-instated as Diwan. Not long after this, he sent word through a Namburi favourite of his that His Highness entertained no ill-feeling towards Sankunni Menon, and that he relied upon the latter, though retired, to bring the boundary disputes between Cochin and Travancore to a successful issue. Finally, he began to correspond with Sankunni Menon *



* The Elaya Raja succeeded his brother in 1088, and about a year after his accession His Highness made Tiruvenkatachari his Diwan.

CHAPTER VI.

REVENUE AND FINANCE

All undertakings depend upon finance.

CHANAKYA'S ARTHASASTRA.

Sankuunni Menon had in view the carrying out of various reforms and improvements requiring comparatively large outlays of money, but the funds at his disposal were very limited. Officers of all grades were very inadequately paid: their salaries had to be substantially increased. Public works of importance to the State and its people involving heavy expenditure had to be carried out. Schools and hospitals had to be established, and several other improvements of a like nature had to be carried out. The civil list allotment had to be substantially raised owing to the increase in the Royal family and the rise in the cost of living. Money was required for all this, but the gross revenue of the State at the time of his accession to office was only 8·7 lakhs of rupees. The idea of adding to the burdens of the people

was extremely repugnant to him; yet he had perforce to find money to carry out his ideas.

Sankunni Menon's father had two measures in contemplation for increasing the land review. One was the re-settlement of garden lands with a view to bring to book the large number of taxable trees planted, and the *parambas* cleared, since the previous settlement, and the other the revision of the commutation price of paddy fixed for the assessment of wet lands. The commutation rate adopted at the previous settlement, viz., that of 1820-1, was seven *para*hs of paddy per rupee, the market rate then being about nine *para*hs. A few years after this the market price of paddy began to rise steadily, and by 1850 it began to exceed the commutation price. A large quantity of paddy was required for expenditure in temples, *uttupuras* (free feeding houses), hospitals and jails; the rise in the price of paddy therefore raised the expenditure on these institutions beyond the sanctioned allotments. Sankara Variyar thereupon proposed the revision of the commutation rate, but before giving effect to this and the other proposal, he died. His

successor carried out the re-settlement of garden lands, and as there had been a steady increase in the planting of cocoanut and arecanut trees in the preceding years, it resulted in increasing the land revenue by Rs. 37,000. Soon after Sankunni Menon took charge, he gave effect to his father's second proposal, and raised the commutation price of paddy to about five *parahs* a rupee, when the receipts on account of land revenue rose by nearly a lakh of rupees in 1861. The opening up of the Nelliampati plateau in the sixties for coffee plantation, where about 8,000 acres were taken up for this purpose by capitalists, mostly European, added about Rs. 12,000 to the land revenue. The extension of irrigation works and the acquisition of a private *anicut* in Chittur, and the improvements to the old and the construction of new minor irrigation works elsewhere, brought large areas newly under cultivation. Thus, the land revenue receipts rose in Sankunni Menon's time from 4.14 to 6.26 lakhs, an increase of 51 per cent.

During the first five years of his administration, the subject of State monopolies and

sea and land customs absorbed a considerable portion of Sankunni Menon's attention. The levy of inland customs and the State monopoly of salt, tobacco and pepper had, in the absence of any agreements between the British, Travancore and Cochin Governments in regard to their trade relations, hitherto proved a source of considerable vexation and embarrassment to the people and the Governments alike. This was especially the case with Cochin owing to the great irregularity of its configuration and the consequent length of its frontier, which is out of all proportion to its area. Tobacco, which was not a monopoly article in the neighbouring Districts of Malabar and Coimbatore, was smuggled extensively into Cochin, while salt, the selling price of which in Cochin was lower than that in Malabar, was equally smuggled into the latter. This unsatisfactory state of things had been for some years a subject of correspondence between the three Governments, which eventually resulted in what is known as the Interportal Trade Convention of 1865.

By this convention Cochin agreed to abolish all inland customs and the tobacco monopoly

to adopt the selling price of salt, and to raise the rates at inland depots so as to place Cochin and British salt on the same footing in the market. To compensate Cochin for the loss incurred by these arrangements, the British Government agreed to make over to the Sirkar a moiety of the customs receipts of British Cochin, and further guaranteed a customs revenue of not less than a lakh of rupees and an import duty on tobacco of not less than Rs. 10,500. Cochin was also allowed to import salt on the same terms as those on which it was imported into British ports. The agreement with Travancore was also on the same lines, except that Travancore did not abolish inland duties altogether, but greatly reduced the number of articles on which such duties were to be levied. This convention has proved a great boon to all parties concerned: it has given a great impetus to inland trade, done away with the worry and annoyance caused by customs officers, and minimised the demoralising practice of smuggling. Both the Government of India and the Home Government complimented the Darbar for "the enlightened spirit

in which the Cochin State considered the proposals of the Madras Government."

Sankunni Menon always looked upon this convention and his share in the shaping of it with considerable satisfaction. The idea of such an agreement originated in August 1860 with Mr. Maltby, who thought that "a convention by which the three States should share in the duties of British Cochin and all frontier customs houses on that side be removed would be one of the greatest boons that could be conferred on Travancore and Cochin." But neither his successors nor the Madras Government showed themselves to be so considerate of the interests of Cochin, and to obtain the above guarantees, therefore, Sankunni Menon had to put up a stiff fight for four years. The letters that he wrote on the subject will make a volume as large as the one that is now in the reader's hands. Space can be found here, therefore, only for one such communication, which is typical of many others.

"By the proposed arrangements the British Government expect to recover upwards of a lakh of rupees on the salt revenue and a considerable revenue

on wines and spirits. The Travancore Government obtains the privilege of their ports being treated on the same terms as British ports and consequently of exporting their produce to British Indian ports free of any duty to the British or Cochin Government. Alleppey will again become a flourishing port, and not to speak of the increase to their salt revenue, their tobacco monopoly will be greatly benefitted by the decrease of smuggling consequent on the increase in the import duty on tobacco in British and Native Cochin. The Cochin Sirkar gains nothing. The produce of Cochin is even now admitted into British Indian ports free of duty to the British Government. Malipuram can never compete with British Cochin, and the increase in the import duty on tobacco may, instead of increasing the revenue, actually decrease it by decreasing consumption and increasing the inducement to smuggle tobacco from Malabar into the country. The arrangements, instead of benefitting this Sirkar, are likely to be injurious to it in more than one respect. They will burden the inhabitants with a heavier salt tax to protect the salt monopoly of Malabar. They will increase the duty on tobacco to protect the tobacco monopoly in Travancore, and they are, moreover, likely to occasion the loss of a considerable portion of the customs revenue of this Sirkar for some years

at least, unless the British Government are kind enough to grant the guarantee now requested. As we gain nothing, the British Government should, I think, see that we lose nothing.

“It is true that our finances are happily in an unembarrassed condition at present, but to make the different branches of the administration effective, it is absolutely necessary to increase the salaries of the now miserably paid public servants, and the expenses under every head are rapidly increasing. The Sirkar cannot therefore relinquish any part of their customs revenue without running the risk of their finances becoming embarrassed, a risk which might affect the very existence of the State.

“Our customs receipts have increased considerably, and we may safely expect these receipts to continue increasing every year if matters are allowed to remain as they are at present. But in asking for a guarantee we make no reference to this prospective increase or to any sum which we have never received. We do not even take the receipts of the most prosperous year as the basis of the guarantee. We ask only for a guarantee against any loss in the average receipts of the last three years, which fall short of the receipts of the most favourable year by Rs. 21,969, and this amount will not, I think, be considered unreasonable.

“If the measures proposed had the effect of securing freedom of trade between the three States, some pecuniary sacrifice might be made by the Governments concerned. But the measures proposed will not have any such effect. Goods passing from British or Cochin territory into Travancore or *vice versa* will be subject to all the delay and annoyance at present experienced. Few goods however will pass the Travancore frontier. If Travancore goods can be imported free of all but their own duty from Alleppey and be charged with a double or treble duty if they come to British Cochin, it is evident that these goods will under no circumstances be brought to Cochin. In the same manner British and Cochin produce will not find its way into Travancore. All backwater traffic between Travancore and the Cochin and British territories will be effectually stopped with the exception of a few articles, the produce of Travancore, which are required for actual consumption in Cochin and Malabar, and a very few of the products of Cochin and Malabar, which are consumed in Travancore. The Sirkar sees no ground therefore for relinquishing any portion of their customs revenue even if they are able to relinquish it.

“It is true that, if the British Government resolve to admit Travancore to the privileges of the

Port to Port Act without insisting on the backwater trade being made perfectly free and without allowing to Cochin the guarantee now requested, the Cochin Sirkar will suffer a considerable loss, inasmuch as no Travancore goods will come through Cochin territory into British Cochin, and this Sirkar will lose the duty on such goods. The Cochin Sirkar will not, however, be worse off than by the proposed arrangements. It will continue to levy duty on all its imports and exports. It will also be at liberty to modify the tariff valuations and the rates of duty with sole reference to its own interests instead of being bound to adopt any particular tariff or rates of duty. It will also not further be necessary to burden the inhabitants with a heavier salt and tobacco tax.

“The British Government can certainly admit Travancore to the advantages of the Port to Port Act without reciprocity on their part and without the inland trade being rendered free, but why should they do so? I do not think it will be just on their part to accord to Travancore privileges which they have not accorded to Cochin and the want of which causes considerable loss of revenue to this Sirkar. When in 1846 the British Government agreed to withdraw their *Chowkies* (inland customs) on our Malabar and Coimbatore frontiers and to allow goods to pass from one country into the other without the

payment of duty to the British Government, it was on the understanding that this Sirkar should abolish their *Chowkies* and refrain from levying any duty there. The consequence is that a great portion of the produce of Cochin is taken to Malabar or Coimbatore without paying any duty to this Sirkar, and even such produce of the northern Districts of this country as is taken to British Cochin for export evades the payment of an export duty to this Sirkar by being taken in the first instance to the adjoining British Taluk of Chowghat and by being then brought into British Cochin as the produce of British territory, on which the Sirkar has given up its right to levy any duty by the above arrangements. These arrangements preclude the possibility of our raising our export duty to any considerable extent, because, if the duty is heavier than the expense of carrying the goods to our northern frontier, the merchants can take the goods to Malabar and avoid the Cochin duty altogether. There is a similar loss in our import duty also. By the proposed arrangements Travancore is to have all the advantages without any of the disadvantages of free trade with British India. British goods pay no duty to Travancore Government on export into Travancore, and Travancore goods pay no duty to the British Government on import into British territory. The Travancore

Sirkar proposes to levy a duty on the greater part of their imports from British territory. We might claim the same privileges with Travancore, and, by placing a cordon of *Chowkies* on all our frontiers, recover the duties lost to us by the arrangements made in 1846. But this is a movement in the wrong direction, and it is to avoid any such measure that we request a guarantee.

“Regarding salt it is impossible to say at present what will be the consumption when the price is increased to the British selling rates. The average consumption in those Taluks which do not border on Cochin is stated to be 16lbs per head, and Mr. Maltby calculates that at the rate the inhabitants of Cochin (the population is 399,056 according to the last census) would consume 77,900 Indian maunds of salt. The amount realised by the sale of this quantity, at the British selling price of Rs. 1—8—0 per maund, would be Rs. 116,850, deducting from which the cost at 48 rupees per 100 maunds, which is the average price of the last three years including landing, carriage and other expenses, viz., Rs. 37,392, the profit would be Rs. 79,458, which, though it exceeds the average profits of the last three years by Rs. 1,321, fall short of the profit derived in the last year by Rs. 13,087. It is therefore not at all certain that the increase in the selling price would

be attended with an increase in the profits of the salt monopoly. But we do not wish to increase the price of salt. Our selling price is 12 annas 7 pies per maund except in the Chittoor District, where it is sold at 1 rupee in one bankshall and 1 rupee 2 annas in another. By equalising the selling prices we nearly double the selling prices of salt in all the districts but in one. Such an increase in the price of a necessary of life will be a great grievance to the public and will cause serious complaints, and we would not raise the selling price of salt to any considerable extent if the measure was not strongly urged upon the Sirkar by the British Government. First to compel us to raise the selling price of salt against the wishes and the interests of the Sirkar and then to say that any small sum which we may gain by this measure is a compensation for any loss which we may sustain by the proposed arrangements, which confer no advantages on this Sirkar or on trade in general, is in my opinion far from just. Increased prices will decrease consumption, but I think even then 16lb per head is rather a low allowance. We may sell more salt, and there may be a slight increase in the salt revenue, but I consider this to be dearly purchased by the general dissatisfaction and complaints to which increased prices will give rise, and I think that the guarantee for the

temporary loss which we may sustain in our customs receipts should be granted without reference to any small increase which we may obtain in the salt revenue. Trade is gradually increasing. Our share of the customs receipts of British Cochin with the receipts at Malipuram and at the *Chowkies* on the Travancore frontier will in no long time be equal to our present customs receipts from all sources. The British Government will then have to give us nothing until they should make good to us the difference between the present customs revenue of Rs. 90,123 and the revenue which we may derive under the proposed arrangements."

The immediate effect of the convention was a substantial fall in revenue, especially salt, and a considerable gain in administrative convenience. The income from salt fell from Rs. 170,470 in 1864-5 to Rs. 54,693 in 1865-6. The average annual receipts for the three years preceeding the convention on account of customs, salt and tobacco amounted to 3.11 lakhs of rupees, while the receipts for the succeeding three years averaged only 2.46 lakhs. It took more than a decade for the income from these sources to come up to the pre-convention level. But the moral advantages,

the value of which cannot be reduced to rupees, annas and pies, more than counter-balanced the pecuniary loss.

Only two new sources of revenue other than those already mentioned were tapped in Sankunni Menon's time, opium and ganja, which were made articles of Government monopoly in 1861, and the registration of assurances, which was introduced in 1874. These proved sources of moderate but steadily rising incomes. The other increases in the income of the State were the result partly of natural development and partly of careful fostering. During the nineteen years of his administration the total receipts rose from 9·06 lakhs to 13·91 lakhs of rupees, an increase of nearly 54 per cent. This, together with rigid economy in the expenditure, enabled him, notwithstanding the large outlays made by him on public works and other improvements, to invest sixteen lakhs of rupees in Government securities and leave a balance of over four lakhs in the treasury. A few of the remarks made by the Government of Madras and the Secretary of State for India on Sankunni

Menon's financial administration are subjoined.

The Madras Government :—1863- “In reviewing the financial accounts of the Cochin State for the year 1036 M. E., the Governor in Council expressed his gratification at the favourable results which they exhibited, and concurred with the late Resident Mr. Maltby in considering them very creditable to the efficiency of the administration. The results of the past year now reported on are still more satisfactory.

1868—“The Governor in Council cordially concurs in the recognition by the Resident of the rapid progress that has been made by both these Native States in their administration, and he desires to congratulate the Rajas on the success which has attended their enlightened efforts and the material prosperity of their territories, which is manifested in the reports now under review”.

1871—“The report submitted by the Resident on the financial condition of the Cochin State is very satisfactory, and reflects much credit on the administration of the Sirkar.

The Secretary of State :—1863-“The favourable results of the year and the prosperous condition of the finances are viewed by Her Majesty's Government as satisfactory and creditable to the Diwan's administration.”

1867—“The promptitude with which these documents (administration report and financial statement)

have been submitted and the favourable nature of their contents evincing the increasing prosperity of both these States are highly creditable to their respective rulers and their Diwans."

1869—"Her Majesty's Government concur with you in the high opinion you express of the administration of both these States under their enlightened Rajas, whose efforts are judiciously seconded by their respective able ministers."

Sankunni Menon did not pay that personal attention to treasury administration and the maintenance of public accounts which his father did, nor had he the same intimate knowledge of the work. The facts that everything went on for many years without any hitch or mishap and that the account and treasury departments were under the supervision of the Huzur Sheristadar E. Ittuthra Wariyar, an officer who thoroughly understood his work and in whom the Diwan had the utmost confidence, lulled him into security. But early in 1872 he was rudely awakened from this fancied security by the receipt of an anonymous petition, saying that the treasury officers had for some time been embezzling Sirkar money and that an examination of the treasury would reveal a

a deficit of at least a lakh of rupees. Sankunni Menon was all the more disturbed by the announcement on account of the circumstance that a similar defalcation that had occurred in Travancore in the previous year was the primary cause of the rupture between the Maharaja and his Diwan Sir. T. Madhava Rau. An examination of the treasury showed that the actual amount found in it was short of the balance as per accounts to the extent of Rs. 53,000. The following extracts from a memo furnished by the Diwan to the Resident will show how the treasury was managed at this time.

“The Treasury officials are a cash-keeper, two assistants, an head accountant and five accountants. It is the duty of the assistants to count and examine the genuineness of the coins as they are brought in. They are not allowed access to the strong room. The cash-keeper has always been considered responsible for the money in the Treasury. He has the keys of the box in which the current receipts are deposited in the wooden closet, in which the treasure boxes are secured, as well as of the two rooms. Whenever he finds it necessary to be absent for a day or two, he leaves a small sum with some one in the Treasury to

meet current expenses.... ..Should some of the sealed copper pots in which the remittances from the Taluks are received be deposited in the strong room from want of time to open them and count their contents on the day of their receipt and should the cash-keeper be unable to attend, he sends the key of the room by a confidential person who locks the room and takes back the key soon after the pots are taken.

“The keys of the other boxes in which the Sirkar money is secured as well as the keys of the boxes containing the different deposits are in the hands of the Huzur Sheristadar, who exercises supervision over the Treasury as over the accounts and revenue departments. He cannot, however, be said to be in charge of the Treasury as the Deputy Collectors are in charge of the District Treasuries in the Madras Presidency. The accounts of the Treasury are not submitted daily for his examination and signature, he holds no direct communication with any public officer and, strictly speaking, he cannot, on his own authority, order any payments to be made from the Treasury. The keys of the strong box or boxes used to be kept in the Diwan's own possession in former days.

“At the close of each month or rather about the 5th or 6th of the following month, the cash-keeper sends to the Huzur an account of the receipts and disbursements with a separate statement of the

balance including advances outstanding and containing particulars of the coins composing the sum actually in the Treasury. It shews also separately the amounts in the strong boxes and in the cash-keeper's box. The Sheristadar deputed one of his subordinates with this statement and the keys in his possession to examine the cash-keeper's box and to transfer the contents thereof to the strong box with the exception of a small sum of 4 or 5,000 rupees, which is left in the cash-keeper's hands for current expenses. Neither the strong boxes nor the deposit boxes are examined on such occasions, although the latter are opened, if any sums have to be transferred from the deposit to the general account or if any further sums have to be deposited therein. The sum left in the Shroff's hands for current expenses with all sums received during the month remain in the cash-keeper's hands till the statements for that month are received and the amount not required for current expenses is transferred to the strong box."

It is a matter for surprise that under the loose system above explained there had been no defalcations before this. Sankunni Menon took prompt measures to place the management of the treasury on a more satisfactory footing. The cash-keeper and the shroff were prosecuted

and convicted, some of the subordinates were dismissed, and almost the whole of the embezzled amount was recovered by proceeding against their securities and other properties. Agreeing with a suggestion made by the Resident, Sankunni Menon applied to the Madras Government for the loan of the services of an account officer to examine the account system and treasury procedure of the State and suggest improvements. The Government referred the matter to the Accountant General, who was of opinion that the work of enquiry could as well be done by a man of small account experience and that there was less danger of unsatisfactory recommendations from such a person than from an account officer. "In illustration, I may say that, though I think the present system of imperial accounts far better than the old, I have always thought we should have been better off if the English Commissioners had obeyed their instructions by minutely mastering the old system, and so had not yielded to the temptation of the easier task of proposing an entirely new one." The Government thereupon asked the Revenue

Board to suggest the name of a Deputy Collector for the work, but there the matter ended, so far as our records show.



CHAPTER VII.

MISCELLANEOUS IMPROVEMENTS.

Turn him to any course of policy,
The Gordian knot of it he will untie
Familiar as his garter. SHAKESPEARE.

Throughout his administration Sankunni Menon devoted a considerable portion of his attention to public works. His first great enterprise in this direction was the construction of the Shoranur bridge, which was carried out in 1863—6 at a cost of three and a half lakhs of rupees, or about a third of the annual income of the State at this time. Sankunni Menon expected to have the railway extended to the capital of the State in the near future, and the bridge was constructed in anticipation of it. Though the work was carried out by men whose professional qualifications were of no high order, the bridge was found quite fit for the purpose by competent authority when the railway was introduced five and thirty years later.

The roads made in Sankara Variyar's time were not metalled, nor was their drainage satisfactory. These defects became more and more manifest as the volume of traffic increased. Sankunni Menon had most of these roads metalled with gravel and provided with side drains, and he did much to ease their gradients. Several new feeder roads were opened in different parts of the State, and they were all maintained in fairly good condition. Most of the timber-top bridges made in his father's time were replaced by iron girder ones. Sankunni Menon paid special attention to the improvement of the waterways of the State. By the construction of the canals at Tiruvanchikulam, Monayam and Aranattukara, and across the Trichur lake he considerably reduced the distance between Ernakulam and Trichur, and made navigation possible throughout during the hot season as well. During the latter half of his administration he had a steam dredger at work to keep the waterways in serviceable condition.

Cochin owes the majority of its good and spacious public buildings to Sankunni Menon.

Most of the great public offices and schools at Ernakulam, Trichur and other Taluk head quarters were completed or commenced in his time, and he had at least a dozen palaces built for the use of the Royal family. He got the most important of his buidings designed by the well known Madras Government Architect Mr. Chisholm, and had the works carried out according to the elaborate specifications obtained from him. Extensive reclamations along the foreshore of Ernakulam were commenced by him, and it was in his time that Ernakulam began to wear the appearance of a town. In regard to town improvement and road making Sankunni Menon always found a helpful lieutenant in the Diwan Peishkar A. Sankara Aiyer.

Sankunni Menon had always been very anxious to introduce the railway into the State. The question had been uuder his consideration ever since the extension of the railway to Malabar in 1861, and almost throughout his administration he was in correspondence with railway authorities and financial syndicates on

the subject. Proposals were made from time to time by various capitalists to construct a branch line from Shoranur, terminating at Trichur, Karupadanna, Ernakulam or Vaipin, but all the projects proved abortive for one reason or other to Sankunni Menon's great disgust. In the earlier projects the State agreed to take shares to the extent of five to seven lakhs of rupees, and provide the necessary lands, and in a later scheme, that of Mr. Aspinwall of Cochin in 1879—81, Travancore and Cochin undertook to guarantee 2 and 1½ per cent interest respectively on the capital outlay. The scheme was on the point of fruition when, through the intervention of Raja Sir. T. Madhava Rau, the Madras Government relieved Travancore from the engagement made by it. It was the Ayilyam Maharaja that agreed to the guarantee, but his successor, who ascended the *masnad* in June 1880, was opposed to it, and prevailed upon Madhava Rau to write a long memorandum on the subject, in which he threw considerable doubt on the financial prospects of the scheme and animadverted on the action of the Madras Government in

obtaining the guarantee from Travancore*. This was a great disappointment to Sankunni Menon. His diary shows that on three or four occasions Sankunni Menon entertained confident hopes that the extension of the railway to Cochin would be a *fait accompli* in the immediate future.

Before Sankunni Menon's time and for some years after he assumed charge, all public works were carried out by revenue officers with occasional advice or supervision from professional men in Malabar or Travancore. With the steady increase in public works operations, a separate department for the purpose was found to be necessary, and one was organised with an European Engineer named Morris at its head in 1868. The latter was a qualified man professionally, but was careless

* "*Ist April 1881.*— Read Raja Sir T. Madhava Rau's memorandum against the proposed extension of the railway to Cochin. It is very well written, and he is pretty outspoken, as he can afford to be." That Madhava Rau was wrong in his financial forecast was amply demonstrated by subsequent experience. But his authority then was too great to be ignored by Govern-

and indolent. His works progressed unsatisfactorily, and his accounts got into hopeless confusion. Sankunni Menon tried to pull him up more than once, but without success. His services were accordingly dispensed with in 1871, and the Diwan had to proceed against his security to make good the deficit in his accounts. His successor Mr. Macdonald did not fare better. "He will not do any work," says Sankunni Menon, "nor will he allow his subordinates to do it for him. He is thoroughly honest and conscientious, and, I believe, a clever man, but he is so often prostrated by illness brought on by intemperate habits that he has very little time for his work." He had accordingly to quit the service in 1875, and was succeeded by Mr. Hudson, who did satisfactory work during next twenty years.

In Sankunni Menon's time forest conservancy and its importance were but ill understood here as in most other parts of India: present revenue and extension of cultivation were then considerations which over-shadowed all others. Though the unsystematic exploitation and over-working of the forests began in

his time, Cochin owes its teak plantation entirely to Sankunni Menon's initiative. He began to plant up teak in 1873 in the Palappilli forest by the Parakadavu river, and the operations were continued till 1891, by which time the plants numbered about eight lakhs. The teak in this area, though pure, is not of the same satisfactory growth as in some forest areas which had already been denuded by unscientific working. The number of trees in the area now is about four lakhs, and the present value of the plantation is approximately half a crore of rupees.

Sankunni Menon naturally interested himself in right earnest in the advancement of English education in the State. When he assumed charge, there were only two English schools, one in Ernakulam and the other in Trichur, with about 30 boys each on their rolls, and their standards approximated roughly to those of the present second and first forms respectively. Sankunni Menon found the Ernakulam Head Master Mr. Kelly an unsatisfactory teacher, and that of Trichur Mr. Rosemeyer even more so. "What appears to me to be

principally necessary," he told the Resident in 1863, "for the improvement of the school establishments is a good, able and, if possible, a European master for our central school at Ernakulam, the assimilation of our system of education to that obtaining in British India, and a periodical inspection of the schools by competent persons." With this view he looked out for a competent man for nearly three years without success. He advertised in the Madras papers, and received dozens of applications, but neither the Resident nor the Diwan was satisfied with any of the applicants. At last in 1865 the place was offered to and accepted by Mr. A. F. Sealy, and on this appointment Sankunni Menon congratulated himself for the rest of his life. "No appointment made since I entered the Sirkar service," he said five years later, "has given me greater satisfaction than that of Mr. Sealy to the head mastership of our school." At no time did he find reason to modify this opinion.

Under Mr. Sealy the school made rapid progress. In three years its strength rose to about 250, and boys began to be sent up for

the Matriculation examination. In 1872 Sankunni Menon wanted to raise it to a second grade college, but the number of students that passed the Matriculation did not justify that step. With the advent of Mr. Cruickshank in August 1874, however, a new spirit was infused into the school, the results of the University examination that year proved exceptionally satisfactory, and the standard was accordingly raised at the beginning of the next year. By the time Sankunni Menon retired, this institution became one of the best equipped and best known second grade colleges in Southern India. In the meantime, Anglo-vernacular schools were opened in all Taluk centres. They were gradually manned by a competent staff of teachers, housed in spacious buildings, and placed under the supervision of Mr. Sealy, who was appointed Director of Education without prejudice to his duties as head master.

The hospital which his father opened in Ernakulam, Sankunni Menon improved considerably. It was provided with a better building, and its equipment was made more up to date. He opened a hospital at Trichur, and

made arrangements for opening hospitals at Tripunittura, Kunnankulam and Chittur, but these arrangements were carried out only in the time of his successor. The department continued throughout his time to be under the supervision of the Civil Surgeon in British Cochin. Sankunni Menon's achievement in regard to this branch of administration was not very remarkable, but confidence in European medicine was a plant of slow growth in Cochin, and his action in this matter was in keeping with that of a practical administrator, which he was pre-eminently.

The system of registering documents was brought into force by Sankunni Menon in 1874 under the provisions of Regulation I of 1049. The benefits of registration as conferring security of title was at once recognised by the people, and the department has therefore steadily risen in popularity, and brought increasing revenue to the State. Sankunni Menon also organised the Anchal or Postal service as it is now understood. This department was created about the year 1791 with the exclusive object of transmitting official communications

from one station to another. Subsequently, Anchal masters were authorised to accept private covers and transmit them free, and tapal runners also were allowed to carry them on their own record. It was only in 1865 that the department began regularly to carry private letters and parcels and levy postage on them in money.

A fortnightly official gazette began to be issued in 1040 M. E. (1864—5). In the same year Sankunni Menon began to publish a regular annual report on the administration of the State. For the first year or two a Malayalam translation of the report was also published, but this was since discontinued, probably because people did not evince sufficient interest in it. A Government press was established in 1866: till then the gazette, the report and other papers used to be printed at private presses.

All the departments of the State were thoroughly reorganised by Sankunni Menon, some more than once, and were made more efficient than ever before, and no effort was spared to secure the services of competent

men, at least, for the more responsible offices. The salaries of all grades of officers were substantially increased more than once: in fact, the establishment charges were quadrupled during his time.* By this means and by sanctioning a scheme of retiring pensions, and by his own example and vigilance he raised the tone of the service and won the respect and confidence of the people to a remarkable extent.

Sankunni Menon had it in contemplation to carry out the cadastral survey of the State and the re-settlement of land revenue. With this view he got a superior survey officer in the British service in 1877 to explain to him its *modus operandi*. He fully realised the importance and advantages of the undertaking, but advancing years and increasing ill-health

* Throughout his time Sankunni Menon was pestered with applications for increased salaries. "I have applications," he notes "from almost all the departments of the State, and to prevent high expectations I have thought it better not to attend to them for some time." On another occasion—"I do not know how we are to get on if salaries are to be increased at this rate. It is only recently we settled about these salaries, giving liberal increases."

compelled him reluctantly to give up the idea. "It is a very desirable undertaking in Cochin, he says, "but I am afraid I shall not be able to commence it." Cochin had to wait for twenty years after his retirement for the realisation of this idea.



CHAPTER VIII.

CIVIL DISABILITIES.

For freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won. RYRON.

People in all countries, or certain classes of them, have always laboured under disabilities of some kind. In the country of the Malayalis, with their insular habits and customs, such disabilities have prevailed from early times in an aggravated form. Sankunni Menon dealt with three of them in his time, viz., slavery, *uzhiyam* service, and caste disabilities. It may appear to latter-day reformers that he did not go far enough in some matters, but we must bear in mind what the state of public opinion was in his time, and also that he had not altogether a free hand in the matter. He had an extremely orthodox and conservative Maharaja to carry with him.

Slavery was abolished and slaves emancipated in this State in Sankara Variyar's time

by the Proclamation of 1855. "This humane measure," says Sankunni Menon in 1873, "placed the slave castes of Cochin on the same footing as their brethren in British India. It has materially improved the condition of the quandom slaves, though it had not had all the beneficial effects which might have been anticipated. Persons of this caste, generally speaking, continue still to live in miserable huts, to be scantily clothed and to be satisfied with the mere necessities of life. I believe, however, that their food is sufficient and wholesome. It is of course the interest of their masters that they should be in health and working condition. Severe personal ill-treatment is of rare occurrence, and as the former owners know full well that there are no legal means of compelling the freed slaves to remain in their service, they are obliged to be more considerate in their treatment.

"There are very few persons of this caste who are possessed of landed property. Some have asserted their independence and left their former owners, accepting service under other individuals and at other places. The majority of them, however,

continue to serve their old masters, tilling the land on which they have lived for generations. They are generally very faithful and much attached to their masters, some of whom deserve such attachment by the care with which they provide for their wants. They are also very ignorant, very unaspiring and unused to luxuries and the delights of independence. Hence, as long as they are treated kindly and do not miss the few necessities of life to which they are accustomed, they are content to live as their forefathers have done, however degraded their condition may be. This is especially the case in the interior, but near the towns there are many who earn their livelihood as day labourers, and are employed by different persons, the Sirkar included, who are in want of their services. Occasionally we hear of an individual of this caste being detained against his will by his master or by some person who has enticed him away from his master's service. In all such cases I have insisted on the individual being left at perfect liberty to serve whomsoever he liked.

“Although the State has disconnected itself from slavery and declines to enforce any alleged rights in slaves, the Proclamation of 1855 does not prescribe any penalty for the offence of dealing in slaves. The land-holders are in the habit, in consequence, of selling or mortgaging their slaves along

with their land and receiving a consideration for the transfer of their services. Of course, the purchaser or mortgagee is well aware that the document, should there be any, is mere waste paper and that, should the slaves prove disobedient, he has no means of coercing their labour. But he knows also their docility and love of the soil on which they have lived and worked, and would, therefore, be disposed to take his chance of profiting by their services or of losing his money. The amount so hazarded is of course small, and I believe there are no instances of slaves being sold or mortgaged except with the land on which they live. Even if such transactions should be declared illegal and penal, I doubt whether lands which have a number of servants ready made living thereon would not fetch a higher price or be considered as better security than lands without such an advantage, although in other respects they are under exactly similar circumstances. In other words, I am not sure that a consideration would not continue to be offered and received for the services of persons of this caste living on the land, without mentioning the circumstance in the document.

“However, it is but right that this government should use all means in its power to put down so odious a traffic, and I would therefore recommend that a Proclamation be issued by His Highness

declaring, in the words of Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code, that "whoever imports, exports, removes, buys, sells or disposes of any person as a slave, or accepts, receives, or detains against his will any person as a slave, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine." There are no habitual dealers in slaves in this country, and I do not think there is any necessity for the adoption of Section 371 of the Penal Code, although I have of course no objection to its introduction into the Proclamation.

"The slave castes, who have continued in bondage from time immemorial, cannot be expected to avail themselves all at once of the liberty granted to them. Having issued the Proclamation above mentioned, we must look patiently to time, to a strict enforcement of the law bearing on their case, to competition for their labour which will gradually grow up, and to the labours of Christian missionaries and Mahomedans in the field of conversion, for the bettering of the condition of the slave population of this country."

Uzhiyam service also was a time-dishonoured an institution in Cochin and elsewhere. This consisted in exacting gratuitous labour from the people and commandeering provisions

without adequate payment. It was gradually divested of its worst features in the times of Nanjappayya and Sankara Variyar. In a communication dated 30th May 1866 Sankunni Menon has given a full account of the system as it stood at his advent and the changes he made in it. After explaining in detail what services the members of the different castes were required to render, he says:—

“It will be perceived that the services rendered by the inhabitants are of two kinds—manual labour and the supply of provisions, &c. Manual labour may be divided into three classes:— (1) Labour for the use and requirements of the palace and other institutions; (2) occasional repairs to public roads and assisting the police in carrying messages and guarding prisoners; (3) watching their own villages.

“Labour for the palace and other institutions has always been paid for to a certain extent. Sometimes the labourer is allowed only his food for the day, and sometimes he gets some payment for the work done. By the arrangements now made a labourer working for the palace or any other Sirkar institution will be entitled to the same hire as he would obtain if he worked for a private individual. He can scarcely expect more. But there is a spirit

of resistance on the part of the inhabitants, particularly on the part of the Christian community,* and as any combination on their part to refuse to do the work which they have hitherto performed will cause great inconvenience, it is considered inadvisable at present to make the supply of labour dependent entirely on the free will of the people.

“With regard to the second class of labour, the inhabitants are bound to assist the police to the best of their power. It is a duty which they naturally owe to the State, and as each Tannah has a number of villages attached to it and each village has several persons capable of carrying messages and occasionally guarding offenders, this duty falls lightly on the people, and there seems to be no immediate necessity for paying for such labour. The public roads

* Forced labour was prevalent in Portuguese India. In 1545 the King of Portugal issued twenty-five orders to facilitate and expedite the conversion of heathens in their Indian possessions. By one of these, his officers were required to grant privileges of all kinds to converts, among others, that of exemption from forced labour. The coast Christians, the converts made by the Portuguese, enjoyed the exemption till the latter part of the eighteenth century, when they had to submit to it like others. This accounts for “the spirit of resistance” above referred to.

are made and repaired at public expense, but during the rains a hole may be made in one palce or small portion of a causeway washed away in another; these slight repairs can easily be done by the inhabitants owning lands on either side of the road under the direction of heads of villages, and it is only such minor repairs that the inhabitants are expected to do *gratis*. I believe the practice exists, or at least existed, in British territory, and there seems no great necessity for doing away with it at present. Watching their own villages is a work for which the villagers can expect no remuneration from the State. It is a duty which they owe to themselves, and as almost all classes are liable for the duty, it does not press heavily on any particular class.

“The second class of *uzhiyam* service, namely, the supply of provisions, is really productive of evil not so much from the difference between the price paid and the value of the goods received as from the difficulty of ensuring the payment of the money to the persons giving the supplies and of preventing a larger quantity being taken than is required or received. It not unfrequently happens that the ryots have to supply double the quantity actually required by the Sirkar, and as the payment comes through the Tahsildar, Parvatyakars and heads of villages, the latter have it in their power so to harass

the ryots with delay as to make them willing to take the money granted by the Sirkar or even a portion of it as payment in full for the much larger quantity of provisions supplied by them. There are other evils attendant on such a state of things which it is unnecessary here to particularise.

“The system is so oppressive that I have for some time past directed all supplies for the several pagodas and *Uttupuras* to be procured in the market. It was only on extraordinary occasions, such as the great ceremonies consequent on a Raja's death or a marriage in the Royal family that the agency of the Parvatyakars and heads of villages is called into requisition. But even on such occasions a part of the provisions has been obtained from merchants, and it shall be my endeavour so to increase the proportion purchased in the market as gradually to dispense with the agency of the under paid village authorities and unscrupulous heads of villages. All the supplies to the palace used to be procured through their agency, but now, as the rule is to procure them in the market and recourse to such agency is to be exceptional, things will improve.”

“The people do not know,” Sankunni Menon added in conclusion, “that the proposal to modify the system of *uzhiyam* service originated with me, and give me no credit for the same. On the other

hand, they attribute the changes already made to their petitions, and are more assiduous than ever in writing petitions, hoping by their clamour to obtain still further changes. Their assertions are not always true, and I do not think that at present we can do anything further than that which I propose doing."

As a matter of fact, much further was done during the next few years, so much so that there was no vestige of *uzhiyam* service left at the time of Sankunni Menon's retirement.

In 1871, the Government of Madras called for a report on the disabilities of lower castes in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, what they were and how far they had been and could be removed. The material portions of Sankunni Menon's report are given below.

"These disabilities, as mentioned in Mr. Ballard's (Collector of Malabar) communication to Government, are—

"1. The low caste people are not permitted to use roads open to the public of higher castes.

"2. They are not permitted to enter or approach within a certain distance of many courts and public offices.

"3. They are excluded from public service.

"They used to be excluded from the public

schools, but about six years ago this restriction was removed as regards the Anglo-Vernacular schools, and there are now six Izhuva boys receiving education in the High School at Ernakulam. A few boys of the above caste are also to be met with in the District schools. One or two of the District schools are so situated that, if low caste boys be admitted into them, it will give rise to complaints on the part of high caste Hindus residing close to the building, but I have it in contemplation to remove these buildings to more convenient sites and thus leave no further impediment to all the Anglo-Vernacular schools being open to boys of the lowest as well as those of the highest castes.

“All highways connecting one part of the country with another shall be declared to be open to persons of every caste without distinction, and where sections of main lines pass too close to places which it would be very inconvenient to throw open to all classes, a good and convenient line shall be opened, so that persons of every caste shall have uninterrupted highway. Most of the lower classes do use the highways even now; but they are compelled to move off the road whenever they meet a high caste Hindu. This practice will now be discontinued, except when the lower classes meet, as they sometimes do, an idol carried in procession, or any

members of the Royal family, in which case they will have to stand aside until the procession or the members of the Royal family pass by.*

“From the Government orders I perceive that the principle laid down by the British Government with respect to towns is that “the high streets of all towns are the property not of any particular caste but of the whole community and that every man, be his caste or religion what it may, has a right to the full use of them.” This principle was laid down, if I am not mistaken, with reference to the state of society on the other coast where *theendal*, or pollution from near approach of an individual of a lower caste, may be said not to exist and where persons of different castes have no great objection to live in houses adjacent to each other. In this country the enforcement of such principle would be most unpopular, and would create discontent in all but a few of the lowest castes. There is a well understood scale of distances within which persons of different castes may not approach each other without one of them polluting the other, and they never live in

* These exceptions were made under the special orders of His Highness. “22nd January 1870.—Paid my respects to His Highness, who is very desirous that low caste people should move off the road when they meet an idol or any member of the Royal family.”

houses situated within a certain distance of each other. An Izhuva may not approach a Brahman's or a Nayar's house, a Cheruma (slave caste) will not be allowed to go too close to an Izhuva's habitation, and even a Cheruma would consider himself and his hut to be polluted if a Nayadi were to pass within a certain distance of it. Thus, the adoption of the principle above mentioned would prove distasteful and inconvenient to all but persons of the very lowest castes, who are few in number.

“The main approach to the courts and the public offices shall be declared free to all, and should any of the buildings in which the courts and offices are now held be so situated as to make it inconvenient to throw open to all classes the roads leading to them, prompt measures shall be taken to remove them to more convenient localities. The Sirkar is fully alive to the importance of removing all impediments to the free access by all classes to the courts of justice and to public offices of the State, and no time shall be lost in issuing instructions on this subject in accordance with the views of Government. All public servants will moreover be directed to permit the approach of all classes without distinction for the performance of business during business hours or when the exigency of the public service demands it.

“The Dévaswams and *Uttupuras* are under the management of servants especially appointed for the purpose, but they are under the supervision of the revenue officers. These officers cannot be relieved of these duties without the appointment of others in their room, and such appointments will necessitate a considerable increase in the expenditure, which the Sirkar is ill-prepared at present to meet. There are also some other difficulties in the way of throwing open the revenue and magisterial offices to all classes. The wishes of Government on this subject will however be kept in view. With regard to the admission of individuals of the lower classes to other branches of the service, the Sirkar has no objection to employ from time to time such as may be found duly qualified.”

The Government of Madras passed the following order on the above report:— “The Government are glad to learn that a very considerable step has been taken to remove caste disabilities in the Cochin State. They willingly accept the assurance of the Sirkar that the completion of this necessary reform will be kept steadily in view.” Sankunni Menon thus set the ball of social reform rolling. If all his successors had given it a push, there would not

have been so much dissatisfaction at the present time.

In regard to the grievances of the tenants who form the great bulk of the population of the State, Sankunni Menon did not show the same liberality and consideration. One-half of the occupied area and all unoccupied lands are the property of the State, while the other half is parcelled out among a few *janmis*, and demised by them to tenants on a variety of tenures. In 1865 Sir Madhava Rau wrote an elaborate and able memorandum, in which he advocated the bestowal of proprietary right on the holders of government lands and permanent occupancy right on the *kanam* tenants of private *janmis*. The Maharaja of Travancore issued a Proclamation in 1042 M. E. (1886-7), giving effect to these suggestions. The Resident thereupon suggested to Sankunni Menon the desirability of legislating on the same lines in Cochin, but the latter would not agree to it. In an exhaustive memorandum on the subject, he subjected Madhava Rau's views to a trenchant criticism, and expressed the decided opinion that such legislation was neither just

nor necessary in Cochin. The memorandum, which is treated as their gospel by the *janmis*, is well worth perusal, but it is too long to be extracted here.

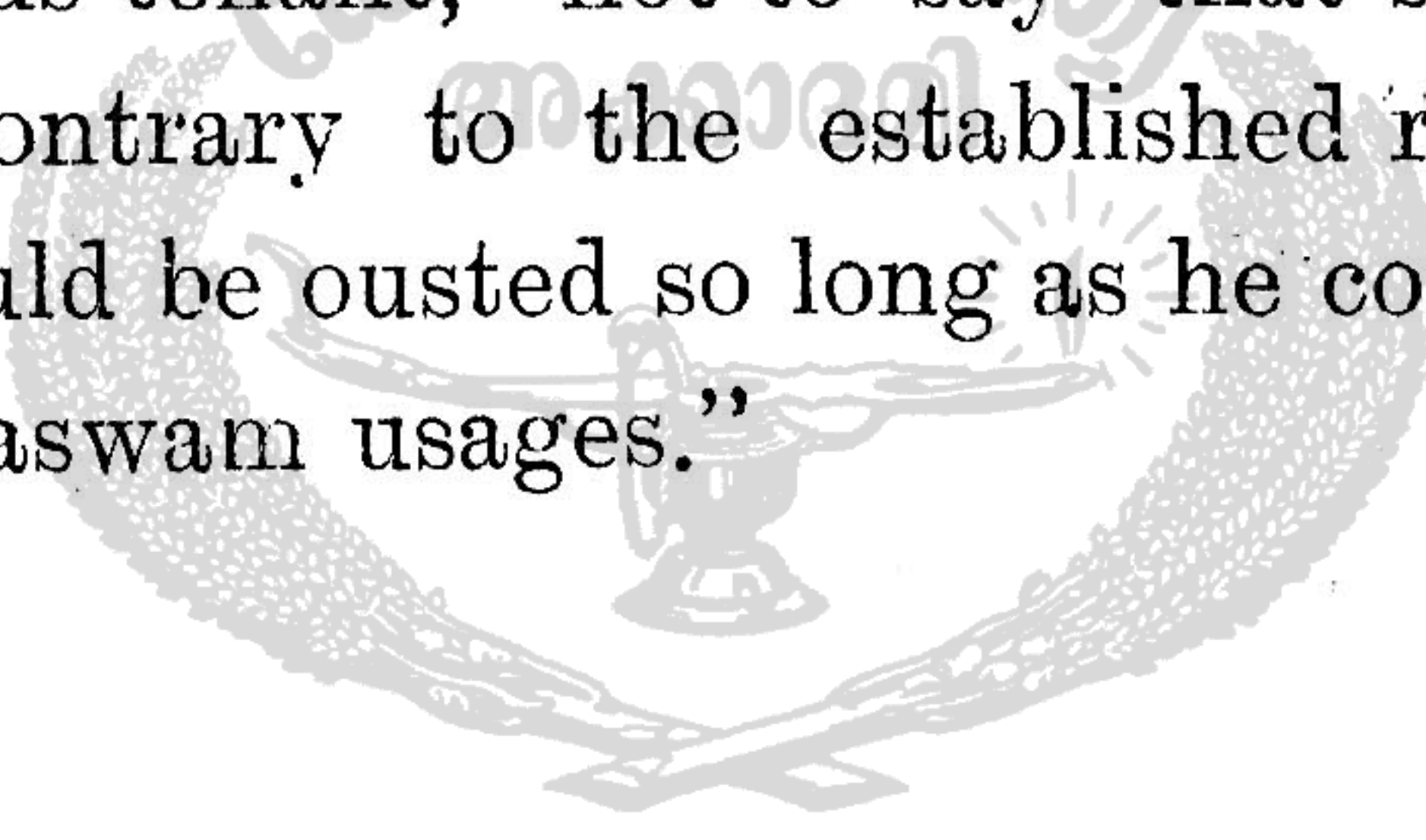
Sankunni Menon's attitude in this matter was probably due to the fact that the grievances of the tenants did not in his time assume the serious form which they did two or three decades later, which induced the Cochin government to confer by legislation proprietary right on the holders of Government lands in 1905 and occupancy right on *kanam* tenants of private *janmis* in 1914. It is also probable that Sankunni Menon had not altogether a free hand in the matter, a suspicion to which colour is lent by the following extracts, among others, from his diaries:—

“26th January 1871.—The *janmis* are very oppressive, and the Diwan (of Travancore) probably wanted to do good to the tenants, but the *kanamdars* are not generally in possession, the lands being cultivated by sub-tenants, who are not benefitted by the measure.”

“1st April 1871.—Told the Sarvadhi yesterday of my having received a letter from the Residen

regarding the Ayyampilli Devaswam* lands, in which he recommends that the law now in force in Travancore regarding *kanam*, *otti* and other lands should be enforced in this country. He repeated it to His Highness, who was in a flurry at once, and ordered a letter to be written to me immediately against any such measure."

"9th February 1872.—The man is a rascal, but as he has agreed to renew the lease, it is not advisable for the Sirkar to enter into litigation with an unscrupulous tenant, not to say that such a step would be contrary to the established rule that no tenant should be ousted so long as he confirms himself to Devaswam usages."



* The Raja in his personal capacity was the *uralar* or trustee of this institution.

CHAPTER IX.

MEN AND EVENTS.

He nothing common did or mean

Upon that memorable scene. ANDREW MARVEL.

True friends are hard to find among men who busy
themselves about politics and office CICERO.

Certain events and incidents in Sankunni Menon's life and career, which should find a place in his biography, cannot appropriately be introduced into any of the preceding chapters. They are therefore gathered together here in their chronological order, together with some account of the chief officers with whom he worked.

The first event to be chronicled here was the visit to Cochin of the first Prince of Travancore, afterwards the famous Visakham Maharaja. As it was exactly three quarters of a century since a member of the Royal family of Travancore paid a visit to the sister State, the event was one of exceptional interest to the princes and people of Cochin. His Highness

arrived in Cochin in January 1862, and was received by the Raja at the Mattancheri palace, where they spent the day together. The next day the Prince was taken to Tripunittura, and was introduced to all the members of the Royal family, on whom he made the best of impressions. His Highness left for Trivandrum the following day. One circumstance connected with the visit is of interest, the nature of which will appear from the following extracts from two of the Diwan's letters to the Resident.

“The details have been satisfactorily arranged with one exception, viz., that of giving presents to the Prince. On this point His Highness is of opinion that the custom observed in 962 M. E. (1787 A. D.), when the then Raja and First Prince of Travancore paid a visit to the then Raja of Cochin, should be adhered to and that some presents should be given to the Prince and his followers.”

“Regarding the exchange of presents, I beg to observe that such has been the immemorial custom of these States, but as His Highness the Raja of Travancore is so averse to its continuance that I have, with the concurrence of His Highness, intimated to His Highness the First Prince that the former will be glad to receive the Prince's visit without

this ceremony. His Highness trusts, however, that this arrangement will be considered reciprocal."

His Highness the Raja died on the 7th February 1864 after a prolonged illness, and his successor Raja Rama Varma was installed on the *masnad* on the 29th March. The Diwan had been so assiduous in his attendance upon His Highness during his illness that his own health broke down, and he was seriously ill for some time. It was with difficulty that he presented himself at the installation of His Highness's successor for a few minutes. "I am well aware," writes Sankunni Menon's brother some twenty-two years later, "of the anxieties and privations to which a Diwan is subjected during the illness of a sovereign. My brother could never shake off the ill effects of the close attendance which he paid to the late Raja of Cochin during his last illness." Though he recovered from his illness, he never afterwards enjoyed the robust health which had been his before this break-down.

On the invitation of his Royal brother of Travancore, the Raja of Cochin visited that State in 1866, and met with a magnificent

reception. This was the first meeting that took place between the two rulers since the time of Tipu, and was therefore a source of much reciprocal congratulations, as it was calculated to confirm the amicable relations subsisting between the two States. His Highness arrived at Trivandram on the 4th November, accompanied by the Diwan and a numerous staff, and was received by the First Prince at the landing place, and after mutual exchange of compliments, the two drove in procession to the Palace, where he was cordially welcomed by the Maharaja. Their Highnesses fraternised together for three whole days. On the 6th there were arranged races and other sports, and in the evening the public gardens were illuminated. On the evening of the 7th, there was a grand display of fire-works in front of the Darbar Hall, after which His Highness took leave of the Maharaja and left for Cochin. During this visit His Highness of Travancore showed great cordiality to Sankunni Menon on more than one occasion.

In the following January His Highness the Maharaja paid a return visit to Cochin.

Sankunni Menon went to Vaikam, and escorted His Highness to Ernakulam, where he was received by the Elaya Raja at the landing place and taken in procession to the Darbar Hall. He was cordially welcomed by the Raja accompanied by some of the Princes. There were feastings, illuminations, fire-works and all the other paraphernalia of oriental hospitality. His Highness halted also at Trichur and Shoranur on his way, and left for Madras on 26th January, the Diwan accompanying him as far as Shoranur. His Highness repeated his visit to Cochin in March 1870 on his way to and from Madras, and also in November 1875, and on all these occasions, His Highness was received and entertained with the same splendid hospitality. The arrangements for all these visits were made under Sankunni Menon's personal supervision, and gave universal satisfaction.

The Governor of Madras, Lord Napier, accompanied by Lady Napier and staff, visited Cochin in March 1868, and was accorded a splendid reception. His Lordship arrived at Bolghatty on the 4th, and remained in the State for five days as His Highness's guest. Besides

the mutual exchange of visits, a Darbar was held to receive His Excellency in State. There was also a State Banquet,* followed by a grand display of fireworks. At nights the foreshores were brilliantly illuminated. Besides occasionally meeting him, the Governor accorded three long interviews to Sankunni Menon, and expressed his gratification at the reception accorded to him. The arrangements made on this occasion formed the precedent for those made for subsequent gubernatorial visits. In Sankunni Menon's time there were no more visits of this kind.

Mr. Jasen, a distinguished painter, visited Travancore and Cochin in 1868 with recommendations from high quarters. Sankunni Menon made the necessary arrangements for getting the portraits of the Maharaja, the Elaya Raja and the First Prince painted. While this work was in progress, the Resident suggested that the Diwan's portrait also should be added to the gallery at the cost of the Sirkar. "The

* The speeches made at the banquet are not to be found among the official records or the private papers of the Diwan.

Diwan has served Your Highness most faithfully," he said, "and conducted the administration of the Cochin State in such a way as to call for the approval of the British Government, and to keep up a good place for it in the estimation of native governments by the Paramount Power and the public in general." "I cordially agree in all that you have said of my Diwan," His Highness replied. "I have the highest opinion of his character, and appreciate his valuable services most highly."

His Highness the Raja was one of the recipients of the birthday honours in 1869: he was made a Knight Commander of the order of the Star of India. Sankunni Menon wanted His Highness to receive the insignia "with befitting ceremony", but the latter's health was too poor for it. The investiture was therefore postponed, and it was only on the 8th March 1870 that "the ceremonial of presenting the insignia took place in the Palace at Ernakulam, where Their Highnesses the Elaya Raja and the Princes, a number of ladies and gentlemen invited for the occasion, the Diwan and the principal officers were assembled. A large

crowd of spectators had also gathered to witness the ceremony." The investiture was made by the Resident Mr. Ballard, who made a congratulatory and complimentary speech. In the evening there were a grand feast for the Indian officers and others, a dinner for the Eurasians, and a State Banquet for the Europeans, which was followed by a splend display of fire-works.

In March 1870 the Governor invited the Raja to Madras to participate in the reception of H. R. H. the Duke of Edinburgh. As his health still continued to be indifferent, His Highness deputed his brother the Elaya Raja to represent him on the occasion. At his own request his favourite, Tiruvenkatachari, was deputed to accompany him as the chief officer of his staff. In view of the importance of the occasion, the Resident wanted the Elaya Raja to be accompanied by the Diwan, but the latter said—"I should be happy to accompany His Highness the Elaya Raja, if he would allow me to do so, but I understand that he has no intention of making any alteration in the unsatisfactory relations now existing between us,

and under the circumstances I consider it much better for me to remain where I am."

In 1871 Sankunni Menon was made a Companion of the Order of the Star of India. In 1868 Mr. Minchin strongly recommended him for it: why he was not then admitted to the Order is not definitely known, but a probable explanation is afforded by an entry in his diary on the last day of that year. "So it seems that I have a good chance of becoming a C. S. I., but I do not know whether I can accept the honour before it is granted to my sovereign."

"*26th May 1871.*—The names are given in to-day's papers, and amongst them appears as C. S. I. 'Sankunni Menon', meaning probably myself. V. Ramiengar is also there, and between his name and mine the word 'Totcaut', which is probably intended for my house name. I believe Mr. Ballard has been exerting himself on my behalf, although I told him that I did not want such a distinction."

"*19th December.*—Went to Bolghatty at 20 after 4 with the Sheristadar, my brother and my sons. His Highness, his brother, and the First and Second Princes arrived at 4-30 p.m. The ladies and gentlemen from Cochin had arrived some time previously. The judges and other officers

were also present. I was conducted to the room by Dr. Fry, and the Resident invested me with the Insignia. At Mr. Ballard's request Dr. Fry read the Royal Warrant admitting me to the Order. Mr. Ballard then addressed a few words to me, spoke approvingly of my services, which were more useful than showy, and the pleasure I must feel in this recognition of my merits and of the presence of His Highness and the Princes and of my friends and sons, and hoped that the latter would follow my footsteps and become themselves the recipients of similar honours. I expressed my feelings of gratification and thankfulness. Mr. Ballard retired. Received congratulations from my friends, and also from Mr. Ballard when he came down with His Highness."

A local paper, writing about this investiture, gave true expression to the feelings of the people of Cochin. "There is no doubt," wrote the *Cochin Argus*, "that the Diwan of Cochin has done a great deal for the State, and we feel sure that he deserves greater dignity than being placed in the first step of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India. His close attention to the administration, the interest he takes in advancing the prosperity of the coun-

try, his thorough knowledge of the details of the administration, and his uprightness have earned for him the confidence of His Highness's subjects and of the British Government. It is, however, a matter of gratification that at least some recognition has been made of the Diwan's services, but we hope that greater honour would, at no distant time, be conferred on him, and that he would soon be styled Sir Sankunni Menon."

In April 1872 Sir Madhava Rau retired from the Diwanship of Travancore. "You are probably aware," he wrote to Sankunni Menon, "that I shall cease to be Diwan from the 1st of next month, retiring on honourable pension I cannot leave Travancore without offering you my cordial acknowledgments for the numerous proofs of courtesy and kindness which have characterised your intercourse with me during my tenure of office. Indeed, I will always look back with sincere pleasure on the very friendly feelings which have subsisted between us for a series of years, feelings which, I am sure, will survive our official connection. Sankunni Menon replied:

“Although I cannot but regret that the administration of Travancore will no longer receive the benefits of your guidance, I rejoice that your invaluable public services to the State during a long series of years have met with a fitting and honourable recognition. I am much touched by your allusion to the kindness and courtesy you have experienced from me during our official intercourse, and you will accept my cordial assurance that the personal feelings of esteem and regard which that connection has established will continue to subsist between us long after our official ties shall have ceased.”*

Sankunni Menon was freely talked of about this time as being the most likely man

* It appears from Sankunni Menon's diary that a great many private and demi-official letters passed between these two statemen. All but the two quoted above have unfortunately been lost. Early in 1871, he noted in his diary —“I hope Sir Madhava Rau will not throw up his appcintment, for though a Maharatta to the core and very proud into the bargain, no one can deny his administrative ability and the amount of good he has done to Travancore.”

to succeed Madhava Rau. A local paper went so far as to speak of it as a settled fact. Colour was lent to the rumour by the fact that Vedadrisadasa Mudaliar, whose influence with the Maharaja and whose opposition to Madhava Rau were among the chief factors in bringing about the latter's retirement, was one of Sankunni Menon's most sincere and devoted friends.

"13th February.—Vedadri says that I am one of the persons talked of as the Knight's successor, and hopes I would be well enough to accept, should the offer be made."

"14th February.—Sent a reply to my friend the Mudaliar that the state of my health will not allow me to accept the Knight's post, even if it were offered to me. I believe his letter is a feeler sent under inspiration, and have thought it better to answer it at once."

Sankunni Menon might well suspect that the letter was a feeler sent under inspiration, for the Maharaja was very favourably disposed towards him. On receiving intelligence of His Highness's death in 1880, he notes—"I am very sorry to hear this sad news, as His Highness has always been kind and partial towards

me. Indeed, he has very winning ways, and every one feels pleased and satisfied after an interview with him. Our Maharaja will be very sorry, as the two have been great friends for many years."

In 1872 the Muppil Nayar of Kavalapara, an aristocratic family in British Malabar, died, leaving a minor as his heiress. A considerable portion of the Nayar's estate being in Cochin, the Collector of Malabar as Agent to the Court of Wards asked Cochin to hand over to him the management of that portion as well. The Diwan replied that the Collector had no *locus standi* in Cochin and that he had already made his own arrangements for the management of the Cochin portion of the estate. The Collector thereupon wrote to the Resident :—

"I confess that the measures briefly announced by the Diwan, under which the Court of Wards, the legal representatives of this British subject, are to be debarred from any voice in the management of such part of the property as lies in Cochin, appear to me to require re-consideration. It is true that the act constituting the Court of Wards has no force in Cochin, but the succession to the guardian-

ship, &c. of foreigners is, I believe, universally admitted to be governed by the law of the country to which they belong. The Court of Wards would come into Cochin with no public or authoritative character, but simply in the position of private individuals, in whom the British law has vested the control and guardianship of the minor, and it appears to me that the Cochin authorities are no more justified in ignoring this position than they would have been in ignoring the late Nayar himself and refusing him access to his own property. This is the light in which the matter presents itself to me, and from the wording of your letter I gather that you are not satisfied altogether with the position taken up by the Diwan."

"I beg to state," said Sankunni Menon in the course of his reply, "that there appears to me to be considerable difference between the owner's management of her property in this country and the management of such property by the officers of another government in her behalf. The owner, for instance, is not interested in the alienation of the property and the prevention of the same escheating to this Government, should she unfortunately die young and heirless, which I trust she will not. The officers of the foreign Government may be so interested, as the proceeds of the sale of the property

will then naturally escheat to their own government. I do not for a moment mean to insinuate that I have any fear in the present instance of the officers of the British Government authorizing any alienation for the purpose of defeating the just rights of this Government, but it must be admitted that there is nothing to prevent their doing so, and, as this is the first case of the kind which has occurred, I am obliged to be cautious and to look at the matter from every point of view.

“The Collector in the 3rd para of his letter states that “the succession to property, guardianship, &c. of foreigners is, I believe, universally admitted to be governed by the law of the country to which they belong”. Should this be the case and should the British Government be prepared to observe a reciprocity of practice in the case of all Cochin minors possessed of property within British territory by allowing the agents appointed by this Government to assume charge of such property, I would not have objected to comply with Mr. Macgregor’s wishes in the matter. I find, however, that such is not the case, and that the British Government cannot maintain reciprocity in such matters. The Regulations relating to the Court of Wards are silent on this subject; but that the manager or guardian appointed by one government cannot

assume charge of the real property of a minor situated in another territory is conclusively established by the annexed extracts from Story's "Conflict of Laws" and Phillimore on "International Law."

It need hardly be said that after this the Court of Wards acknowledged that the position taken up by the Collector was untenable.

In May 1873 Sankunni Menon's most intimate friend and cousin, E. Krishna Variyar, who was then the Tahsildar of Talapilli, died at Ernakulam in the Diwan's residence after a short illness. No death, since that of his father and of his wife, affected him so painfully as his. "Thus has passed away my earliest and best friend A sad heavy day. Krishna Variyar was the ablest member of the family, and all will deplore his loss."

In 1884 Sankunni Menon's pay was raised to Rs. 1300 per mensem for exceptionally meritorious work, no Diwan having previously received more than a thousand. In suggesting the increase, His Highness wrote to the Resident.—"The merits of my Diwan are, I believe, as well-known to you as they are to myself. During his administration extending over a

period of more than fourteen years the country has been happy and prosperous, and there has been none of those unseemly misunderstandings between the sovereign and his minister which prevailed during the regime of my predecessors. Since he assumed charge, the salaries of many of the principal officers of the State have been doubled and trebled, and he alone has derived no benefit from the increased revenues of the country, which must mainly be attributed to his successful administration. As a mark of my appreciation of his services, I am desirous of giving him an increase of of Rs. 300 per mensem, and I trust that this measure will meet with your approval." In his reply the Resident Mr. Ballard said.—"I am very happy indeed to believe that your Diwan's conduct and services well merit the acknowledgment, and that they are acknowledged so kindly and appropriately by Your Highness will, I am sure, be a source of deep satisfaction to Sankunni Menon, independently of the mere money consideration.

The Prince of Wales visited Madras in December 1875, when the Raja, on the invitation

of the Governor, proceeded to that place to pay his respects to His Royal Highness. This was the only visit that His Highness ever paid to Madras. After exchanging visits with the Governor the Duke of Buckingham, His Highness paid his respects to the Prince on the 13th with valuable presents, with which the latter was highly pleased. The visit was returned on the 15th when return presents were given to His Highness, which included, among others, a signet ring, a medal and a sword. Sankunni Menon had the honour of being presented to His Royal Highness by the Duke of Southerland.

In April 1880, Sankunni Menon was "deeply grieved" by the demise of His Highness Rama Varma, the First Prince of Cochin—"a very amiable, intelligent and well-informed Prince". Next to the Maharaja, he loved and admired this Prince more than any other member of the Royal family. In the same year he had also to mourn the loss of a protege and and cousin of his, E. Krishna Warriar, a young man of great promise. "There is no member of the Edakunni family so intelligent and well

educated. I liked the appearance of the boy when I met him at Edakunni many years ago, and so brought him down and had him educated. He fully justified my expectations by passing all examinations rapidly. Then I sent him to Madras where he soon graduated in arts and law He was very sociable and conciliatory, and won friends wherever he went.”

Of all the principal officers of his time, Sankara Aiyar was Sankunni Menon's chief favourite. He had almost a paternal regard for him. He admired Sankara Aiyar's intellect and scholarship, his ready pen and glib tongue, and his essential good-heartedness. His quaintness and eccentricities were a perennial source of amusement to him, but they only added more to his liking for the man. Sankunni Menon's first idea was to make him the head master of the High School, but as the latter had passed the necessary law examinations, he was appointed Zilla Judge in 1866, and was made Diwan Peishkar in 1870. He found him “a well educated young man whose integrity had never been questioned, and who was in no way

mixed up in any intrigue." Sankunni Menon intended that Sankara Aiyar should succeed him when he retired, and got him appointed to act as Diwan on several occasions, so that the Raja might grow accustomed to him, but that gentleman was unfortunately not able to inspire confidence in His Highness, as will be seen presently. Sankunni Menon deplored this circumstance, and also his tactlessness and imprudence. Sankaria Aiyar for his part had the most sincere respect for his chief, and served him with marked loyalty. Being full of ideas, however, he used to worry him with proposals for changes and for being entrusted with more power. "Sankara Aiyar complains of centralisation in the Huzur, but has no objection to his being the centre of everything." "Sankara Aiyar asks me to write an autobiography. I am not well enough to attempt it, and it is hardly worth while".

The Deputy Peishkar Madhavan Elayad enjoyed Sankunni Menon's confidence in large measure. He was the latter's first Head Rayasam or Munshi, and was promoted to a Tahsildarship in 1872. "He has been a very

efficient and trustworthy Munshi for many years. I am sorry to part with him I don't know whom to appoint as his successor.' As a Tahsildar he proved himself to be an active, intelligent and honest officer, and he was promoted to the Deputy Peishkarship when that office was created in 1878. He made himself very useful to Sankunni Menon as well as his successors, and was a *persona grata* with His Highness and most other members of the Royal family. He did not know English, but his Malayalam reports were 'models' of their kind.

E. Ittutra Variyar, the only brother of Diwan Sankara Variyar, was the Huzur Sheristadar throughout Sankunni Menon's tenure of office as Diwan. The latter desired to make him Diwan Peishkar in 1865, as he thought that "from his long service and intimate knowledge of the details of business as well as from his irreproachable character he was well qualified" for the office. The Resident objected to the appointment on the ground of his relationship to the Diwan, and even recommended his transfer to the judicial department

But the Diwan considered it an ill-advised step "to transform a good revenue officer into an indifferent judge," and Ittutara Variyar retained this office till his retirement in 1882 after a service of fifty years.

G. Appattura Aiyar was another of Sankunni Menon's trusted lieutenants. He was a Vakil at Veliyangod when the latter was District Munsiff. He was appointed a Munsiff in Cochin when Sankunni Menon became Diwan, and was afterwards transferred to his own office as Police Sheristadar. He made himself very helpful to the Diwan in the disposal of complicated cases, in his quasi-official activities, and later on in the preparation of the written statements in the boundary cases. Sankunni Menon had great confidence in his ability and integrity, a confidence which he never found reason to regret. Appattura Aiyar had a remarkably short temper, which was a source of great amusement to his chief, but his anger, like that of all short-tempered men, was always of short duration. "Won a rupee at cards. Appattura Aiyar lost a few annas, and with them his temper."

No appointment made in his time gave Sankunni Menon more satisfaction than that of V. Subrahmanya Pillai as the First Judge of the Appeal Court. He jealously maintained the dignity and independence of the bench, and always administered substantial justice tempered by mercy. The reputation of the judicial department reached its highest water-mark during his time. These two distinguished officers had a great mutual respect and regard, and very frequently visited each other, notwithstanding the two or three official collisions that they had. To the end Sankunni Menon held the opinion that Subrahmanya Pillai was "a good man and an able Judge," and treated him with high courtsey and consideration. When Subrahmanya Pillai went to view the body of Sankunni Menon lying in state after his death, he, a very undemonstrative and self-contained man though he was, did not care to conceal the tears that coursed down his cheeks.

C. Subbaraya Aiyar was one of the most frequent of the Diwan's visitors, and the most assiduous in cultivating his good will. He was appointed Zilla Judge in 1870 on the

recommendation of the late Maharaja (then First Prince) of Travancore, and was raised to the Appeal Court bench in 1874. While holding the latter office, he died in 1887 at the early age of 40. He was an able, well-informed man, a ready writer and a good lawyer. Sankunni Menon had a high opinion of him, of which he made no secret, and consulted him freely on different matters. In 1879, however, Sankunni Menon had the shock of his life. "*30th July.*— Meeting Appattura Aiyar the other day near his house, Subbaraya Aiyar called him in. It was soon after His Highness had nominated my brother as my successor and before anything was known of the result. Subbaraya Aiyar told him that my brother would never get the appointment, and further that he would be glad, if some other person became Diwan, as in that case he would have the pleasure of admitting suits for the properties which were in our possession and deciding them all against us! What a! and yet he now congratulates my brother."

Elamana Rama Menon was the Sarvadhikaryakar during about fifteen years of Sankunni

Menon's administration. He was a shrewd man and an agreeable companion, and a delightful *renconteur*, with an inexhaustible fund of quaint sayings and humorous anecdotes. He proved himself to be a staunch friend and loyal ally of Sankunni Menon, and as His Highness had a great liking for him, he made matters as smooth as he could in regard to the Diwan's dealings with the palace. No name occurs oftener in Sankunni Menon's diaries than that of this life-long friend of his.

Several European officers served under Sankunni Menon in his time, of whom Scipio Vernede was his earliest friend. The latter knew him from his boyhood and took a personal interest in his progress. When Sankunni Menon assumed charge, Vernede had already been twenty-four years in the service as Commercial Agent and Officer in charge of the Diwan's English correspondence, and he served in this capacity for ten years more, when he died suddenly in July 1870. He knew his business well and wielded a facile pen, and Sankunni Menon deeply regretted the loss of one whose "advice and pen had been of the

utmost assistance to four successive Diwans of Cochin." He had life pensions of Rs. 35 each per mensem settled upon Vernede's five unmarried sisters.*

Of all his European officers Mr. A. F. Sealy had the largest share of Sankunni Menon's friendship and regard, and these he reciprocated in ample measure. "No appointment made since I entered the service," the Diwan once said, "has given me greater satisfaction than that of Mr. Sealy to the head mastership of our High School. He has devoted all his energies and all his time to the duties of his office, and the school is in consequence in a most flourishing condition." Mr. Sealy made himself useful to the Diwan in a variety of ways unconnected with his legitimate duties. He superintended the arrangements for State

* "23rd July 1870.— I had little or no sleep last night, thinking of poor Vernede. He was an old friend of my father's and of myself, and was a gentleman in every sense of the word, and greatly respected by all the people. My brother, the Sheristadar and others are going for the funeral. I am not going, not being able to see the lamentations of the poor family."

banquets, darbars and receptions, the decoration and furnishing of palaces and other public buildings, etc., and in all these as well as in departmental matters he was allowed a completely free hand. Only once did Mr. Sealy rub the Diwan the wrong way. He complained to the Resident about the inadequacy of his pay and the humiliation he was put to by being paid less than some of the native graduates. "In giving increased rate of salary," the Diwan said, "the Sirkar must be guided not solely or principally by the merits of the individuals. They must also consider the means at their disposal, the salaries paid to the other high officers of the State and the salaries received by persons holding similar positions in other parts of India Mr. Sealy is wrong to grumble at his receiving 'less pay than some of the native officials and less than one, at least, of the native graduates employed here.' The only native graduate who draws a higher pay than Mr. Sealy is Subrahmanya Pillai; and he draws a higher pay not because he is a graduate but because he is the Chief Justice of the country. The only native officials who receive

higher salaries than Mr. Sealy are the Diwan and the First Judge of the Appeal Court, and these officers you will readily admit should always be better paid than the head master of His Highness' school, whatever may be the comparative merits and demerits of the individuals." This was however but a passing cloud.

Mr. D. M. Cruickshank was another European officer whom he highly respected, though he was not very intimate with him. His great ability as a teacher and his remarkable industry and earnestness made a very favourable impression on the Diwan. He left the Cochin service in 1878 to join the Pachiappa's College as Principal. "His powers of imparting knowledge to the boys," says Sankunni Menon, "are extraordinary, and his devotion to his duties is beyond all praise. Though I do not wish to stand in the way of his advancement, I must say that I part with him with much regret." "I am afraid it will be very difficult to get a man like him." Mr. Cruickshank however rejoined the Cochin service in 1884.

Daniel Gunther was Sankunni Menon's

favourite medical attendant. He was first entertained as a Dresser in 1838, and when the first hospital was established at Ernakulam in 1848, he was placed in charge of it and continued to be so for forty years. Though his educational and professional qualifications were not high, he became a popular and successful medical practitioner. It was he that first popularised European medicine in Cochin. Sankunni Menon had immense faith in him, and never consulted any other physician unless Mr. Gunther himself advised him to do so. And the latter for about a quarter of a century attended on the former with a care and assiduity which left nothing to be desired.

CHAPTER X.

RETIREMENT AND AFTER.

Firm at his dangerous post he stood ;
Each call for needful rest repelled,
With dying hand the rudder held,
Till in his fall, with fateful sway,
The steerage of the realm gave way. SCOTT.

Sankunni Menon had a serious attack of illness in 1872, since which he never again enjoyed really good health. His bowels were seldom in order, for which he had mainly to thank himself. The fact is that Sankunni Menon was rather too fond of the pleasures of the table, and at times indulged in them without moderation. He seldom failed to make gleeful mention in his diary of the feasts that he partook of or of the presents of sweets and fruits made to him by his friends. In 1875, his heart began to give trouble, and there was hardly a day since, on which he did not suffer more or less severe pain. His diary for the last five or six years of his life is a long-drawn-

out wail; dilatation of the heart*, flatulency and insomnia were his complaints. He bore his sufferings with fortitude, none but his intimates being aware how severely he was tried.

Since 1875, Sankunni Menon began to long for retirement and rest, but he experienced as much difficulty in getting out of his high office as others did in getting into it. In May of that year he wrote to Mr. Ballard,—“I am sorry to hear that your connection with these States is about to be interrupted, and I am afraid it will not be renewed. I regret our loss, though I cannot but congratulate you on your promotion. I have served with four or five British Residents, and thought I could

* His medical attendants tried at first, but not successfully, to keep him ignorant of the fact that his heart was affected, and when at last they had to admit it, they tried to make light of the matter. “*27th May 1877*,—The doctor seems to be of opinion that the pain is due to nervous irritability and flatulency and that there is nothing the matter with my heart. I am not sure that he is not telling me a fib to prevent my alarming myself.” “*27th December 1880*,—The doctor does not want me to think of heart disease. I cannot think of anything else.”

retire before another came into office; but you leave us rather suddenly, and His Highness is very unwilling to part with my services, and I must therefore try to remain in office for some time longer." Towards the end of 1876, Sankunni Menon made a serious attempt to retire. The story may be told in his own words.

"9th December 1876.—In my reply to Sarvadhikaryakar I said that for the last four or five days, I have been suffering from a severe pain in the back, that I have been Diwan for seventeen years, too long a period, and that, as I am unfit for any hard work either with my brains or with my body, I should be glad to take my pension at the end of the Malabar year.

"5th February 1877.—Saw His Highness, as I am about to proceed to Trichur, where I propose to spend the two months' leave lately granted to me. His Highness visibly affected at even this temporary official separation. I informed him through the Sarvadhikaryakar some days ago that I would like to retire from office at the end of the Malabar year. At one of my subsequent visits His Highness begged me hard, and made me promise to hold on as long as I could. I am quite tired of my work, and trust I shall be able gradually to induce His Highness to

permit me to take my pension. Unfortunately His Highness has no confidence in the Peishkar or any one else."

"*3rd April.*— Paid my respects to His Highness. He makes several complaints against Sankara Aiyar. I am afraid my friend wants tact very much."

Sankara Aiyer was in charge during the Diwan's leave. The latter continued to try to accustom His Highness to the idea of his early retirement, but without success. Later on, the Resident, Mr. H. E. Sullivan, took the same view as His Highness, and urged him not to retire.

"*8th December.*— Went to Bolghatty at 12. Mr. Sullivan came down ... Before we went upstairs, we had a conversation about my health. He was sorry to hear my retirement hinted at, but he thought a year's leave would set me all right. He also recommended Sankara Aiyar being sent for to do work for me, another Peishkar being appointed to Trichur, and I confining myself to important matters and advising His Highness."

"*13th December.*— He (Mr. Sullivan) again expressed his opinion that, instead of retiring, I should try to appoint another Peishkar and thus to relieve myself of routine work. He offered to write

to Mr. Logan to know if there was any person available there."

Sankunni Menon therefore struggled on for another year, his pain and general health gradually growing worse. He had not only to do his ordinary work, but also to prepare his written statements in connection with the boundary and territorial disputes with Travancore, for the settlement of which an arbitrator was about to be appointed by the Madras Government. For the special work he had to read through voluminous records, both in Malayalam and in English, extending over a period of nearly a century, and also to go through and revise the translations of innumerable Malayalam documents. He soon became incapacitated for this double work, and in the latter part of 1879, therefore, His Highness placed Sankara Aiyar in charge of the ordinary duties of the Diwan, Sankunni Menon attending mainly to boundary work. His Highness soon became dissatisfied with this arrangement.

"26th January 1879.--His Highness is impatient for my resuming charge, being uncertain what

mischief the Peishkar may do while I am employed on special duty. The judges and others, who are not well disposed towards the Peishkar, carry tales about him, and His Highness believes them. Sankara Aiyar is also very indiscreet, speaking out without reserve whatever comes to his mind, and that without reference to the people whom he is addressing."

"*6th March.*— His Highness seems to have no confidence in Sankara Aiyar's judgment, though he admits that he is clever in some respects and very loyal. He is too radical and outspoken, and I am afraid his chances of succeeding me are not great. Curious that he should have faith in astrology! He has a *jotsyar*, whom he is always bothering to give accounts of the life of several individuals from the position of the stars at the time of birth.

"*20th May.*— In reply to a letter from the Sarvadhikaryakar asking about my health, I had told him that I was never quite well, and had no wish to rejoin office again (he was now on leave), although I would try to complete the statements about the boundary disputes. To-day I have a letter from him conveying His Highness's wish that I should remain in office, confining my attention to important matters only."

"*26th May.*— Proceeded to Tripunittura. His Highness said he was very sorry to see my letter

expressing a wish to retire and he expressed a strong wish that I should remain in office at least three years more. He said he was no statesman, and that he could not do without some one in whom he could place entire confidence. His Highness is satisfied that Sankara Aiyar will not do. He wants everything to go on as hitherto, and Sankara Aiyar thinks that everything should be changed. The gulf cannot be bridged, and besides, he does not understand his Malayalam. He does not want any *Paradesi* (non-Malayali) or even a foreign Malayali. He has no objection to my continuing in the boundary business for a long time, giving my attention to only such other matters as may be of importance If there is no objection to my brother being made the Diwan, he would have no objection to my retiring at once, as he knows that everything will go on well. Told him I will remain in office till the boundary reports are ready and that the rest can be determined afterwards."

Highness's proposal to appoint his brother to succeed him took Sankunni Menon by surprise. Personally he would have preferred the appointment of Sankara Aiyar as Diwan and that of his brother as Diwan Peishkar, but His Highness would not agree to such an

arrangement. Govinda Menon's appointment was therefore decided upon, and the Maharaja addressed the Resident on the subject about the middle of June. His Highness, however, had misgivings about Mr. Macgregor's attitude in the matter, as he had of late been behaving most offensively and cantankerously towards Cochin, but the Diwan reassured him. "Then he asked me if the Resident would raise any objections; I did not think he would. His Highness said it was his intention to abdicate, if he could not get for the Diwan the person he wanted, as he wished to avoid all responsibility." The Madras Government approved of His Highness's choice, and in conveying their sanction, the Resident wrote eulogistically of the retiring Diwan and condoled with His Highness on the loss of so trustworthy a minister. He was glad that he was to be succeeded by a relative who would have the advantage of his advice and who possessed His Highness's confidence, and trusted that the result would satisfy all anticipations of good government. Sankunni Menon now breathed a deep sigh of relief, submitted his



H. H. SIR RAMA VARMA K. C. S. I.,
Maharaja of Cochin (1864—88)

formal resignation to His Highness on the 20th August, and retired from his office on the next day. He was granted a pension of Rs. 600 per mensem as a special case, though the pension rules then in force fixed the maximum pension at Rs. 4000 a year. "As neither Rs. 4000 a year," His Highness informed the Resident, "nor a moiety of his permanent pay will adequately mark the high value which I attach to his long and faithful service, I propose to allow Sankunni Menon a pension of Rs. 600 per mensem."

"*21st August 1879.*—Called on His Highness at 7-30 A. M. with my brother. His Highness spoke to me very feelingly about my retirement, with tears in his eyes. He gave me a certificate and a formal blessing, laying the palm of his hand on my head. He did the same to my brother, to whom he entrusted the Sarvadhī. He then told my brother that he should consult me on all important matters, and me that I should not hesitate to remonstrate, if I found anything going wrong, and that I should pay particular attention to the boundary disputes."

"*31st December.*—The year 1879 has come to a close. It has not been a particularly good year to any of us ... My health has throughout been very

unsatisfactory, and I have had to resign my post. The only consolation is that my brother has succeeded me."

The certificate that His Highness gave the retiring Diwan was in the form of a valedictory letter.

"As you have decided to resign the office of Diwan and responsible minister to us in the government of this State, which you have filled for above nineteen years, we desire to present you, on the occasion of your retirement, with a suitable expression of our esteem and an acknowledgement of the high value we have always placed on your meritorious public services. We shall lose in you a safe and prudent administrator, and it shall be a constant regret that the conduct of affairs will no longer be guided by your wise and sagacious counsels.

"We fully realise that, during your tenure of office, the country has made vast progress in material prosperity; the resources of the land have been remarkably developed; commerce and agriculture have been widely extended; and the revenue has attained to an amount that is the highest on record. It is also due to you to state that many useful and well-considered reforms, many judicious acts of legislation, and many wise public measures for the improvement of the judicial, revenue and administrative departments of the state have been initiated under your

fostering care, and have produced fruit to the honour of our government as well as the satisfaction and contentment of our country and people. These services have been recognised by the Paramount Power, which has conferred upon you a substantial token of its favour and appreciation.

“The cordial relations between our Royal House and the British Government, so happily subsisting, have been steadfastly maintained and cherished under your administration, and there is no duty of loyalty, no political obligation that has been left unfulfilled. You have throughout enjoyed our entire and unrestricted confidence, and it simply remains for us to express our wish that every blessing and happiness may attend on your honourable and well-merited repose.”

A public meeting was held at Ernakulam on the day of his retirement to concert measures to present him with a farewell address and to perpetuate his memory. It was the most largely attended meeting that was ever witnessed in Cochin, and the speeches made on the occasion were considerably above the average. The following extracts from the address voted at the meeting will be read with interest:—

“The long term of more than nineteen years during which you have been the chief minister and sagacious adviser of H. H. the Maharaja of Cochin has enabled not only the subjects of this State, but all who have held any intercourse with you, to learn to esteem and respect you so highly that we, your sincere friends and well-wishers felt we could, not allow you to retire from the office of Diwan without some expression of the sincere esteem and regard which we feel for you. Of all the gentlemen who have held the office of Diwan in this State, your tenure of it has been the longest—even three years more than the rule of your honoured father; and while we acknowledge that the great length of your administration has proved of incalculable advantage to the country, we would also reverently recognise it as the reward of good for the unvarying justice and wisdom which have marked your career. To recount all the various reforms and judicious improvements introduced by your advice would, though interesting, unduly lengthen this address, but we must touch upon a few principal points.

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“The general prosperity of the country, its rapid increase in wealth, its advance in commerce, its freedom from outrages and the quiet contentment of the people in a country so unusually thickly po-

pulated are the most convincing proofs that your administration has tended to the welfare of all the subjects of His Highness. We rejoice to know that you eminent services have already gained the marked approval and warm commendation of His Highness the Maharaja, and that they have been recognised by the British Government by the bestowal upon you of the Companionship of the Star of India by the Empress of this realm."

Sankunni Menon replied:—

"I can hardly find words to express in anything like an adequate manner my thanks to yourselves, to the very kind friends who originated the movement, and to the subscribers generally, for presenting me with so handsome and substantial a testimony of your appreciation and regard on my retirement from office. It is naturally gratifying to one, who has occupied a conspicuous place in the government of this State for wellnigh twenty years, to receive the approval of those who have watched and witnessed his work, and some recognition of his services on his withdrawal from the cares of public life; but the satisfaction is infinitely heightened when the estimation proceeds from so respected and intelligent a body as are represented on the committee and the subscription list.

“Much of the encomiums contained in your address I would fain attribute to your friendly partiality rather than to merits of my own. I must yet acknowledge that I have all along laboured with a single-minded endeavour to introduce good government, and institute necessary reforms in the State. I came into office in 1860, at a transition period—on the retirement of one Diwan and the inauguration of a new policy under the auspices of the able Resident Mr. F. N. Maltby. In following the course of progress then initiated, there were difficulties to be overcome, prejudices to be combated, interests to be reconciled, systems of long standing to be remodelled or superceded. But I must confess that I had most able and zealous coadjutors in the heads of departments, who have supported me amidst the anxieties of administration and lightened my task; many of whom I gladly recognize among those who have combined to do me honour. If the general success of my rule be to you a cause of rejoicing, it is to me a source of unmingled delight that I have been enabled to leave the country and its institutions in a more healthy and improved condition than that in which I found them.

“It is unnecessary for me to dwell on the several points mentioned in your address, or to enter into details of effort or success in the particular

departments of the State in the course of my administration. It will suffice to say that to receive so magnificent a gift as that with which I am honoured by you this day fills me with a sense of your kindness that I feel utterly at a loss to respond to. I am intensely conscious how many and how willing have been the kind hearts that have made this handsome gift so splendid as it is. Independently of my humble consciousness of having administered public affairs to the best of my power, there is no compensation at all equal to the assurance that my efforts have been appreciated by those who have been nearest to my hands, and therefore best able to estimate them.

“I will add one word. My retirement has not been a purely voluntary act on my part. The constancy and personal regard of all grades of my subordinates, the cordial support of successive British Residents, and the marked confidence of my Sovereign combined to render my situation most congenial. Ill-health alone has constrained me to the step of withdrawing from active duties. Although I have been forced to retire from the scene of active public life, I shall ever take the deepest and liveliest interest in each and all of the institutions now existing. It will also be my delight to watch over them,

and hear of their future successes and 'progressive development.'"

Subscriptions amounting to over six thousand rupees were collected in a few days, but the committee appointed by the meeting unfortunately slept over the business for eight years, and it was only when popular pressure was brought to bear upon them that they again moved in the matter. It was generally hoped that some striking memorial would be raised in honour of the great minister, but, notwithstanding the protest of many of the subscribers, the committee decided to utilise the fund collected for feeding the poor at Ernakulam once a year on the anniversary of his death.

Sankunni Menon survived his retirement for four years—years of pain and increasing weakness. He still continued to devote some hours every day to the boundary business, to advise on important matters and even to draft important letters.* All this he did with consi-

* Any one reading his journal after his retirement would think that he was still in harness. He refers to official matters as if he was still responsible for the administration. The only difference is that he now uses

derable difficulty. "I tried," says a typical entry in his diary, "to continue the draft of the letter to the Resident, but got the pain directly. After a time I tried again with a similar result. A third trial was more successful." In this way he prepared the written statement in one of the territorial cases, and then handed over the records to the special Boundary Commissioner, who prepared the remaining statements under his direction. After a year or so he became too unwell to draft anything: he then confined himself to giving advice and directions and revising the drafts prepared by others. He had the satisfaction to see all the long-pending territorial and boundary cases disposed of before his death, the decisions being on the whole favourable to Cochin.

By 1881 Sankunni Menon became too ill even to go occasionally to Tripunittura to pay his respects to His Highness. This was a great grief to him. His Highness was equally anxious to see him, and occasionally spent a few

the plural of the first personal pronoun instead of the singular.

days at Ernakulam for that purpose. All the members of the Royal family without exception showed him at this time the utmost consideration and sympathy.

*"12th April 1881.—*The Maharaja was kind enough to send word through my brother that I should not go to Tripunittura for His Highness's birthday, and that I could see him when he came here on his way to Irinjalakuda. The Amma Raja and others are also anxious that I should not get worse by unnecessary exertion, and the Elaya Raja even speaks of coming to my house to see me. So I am in high favour!"

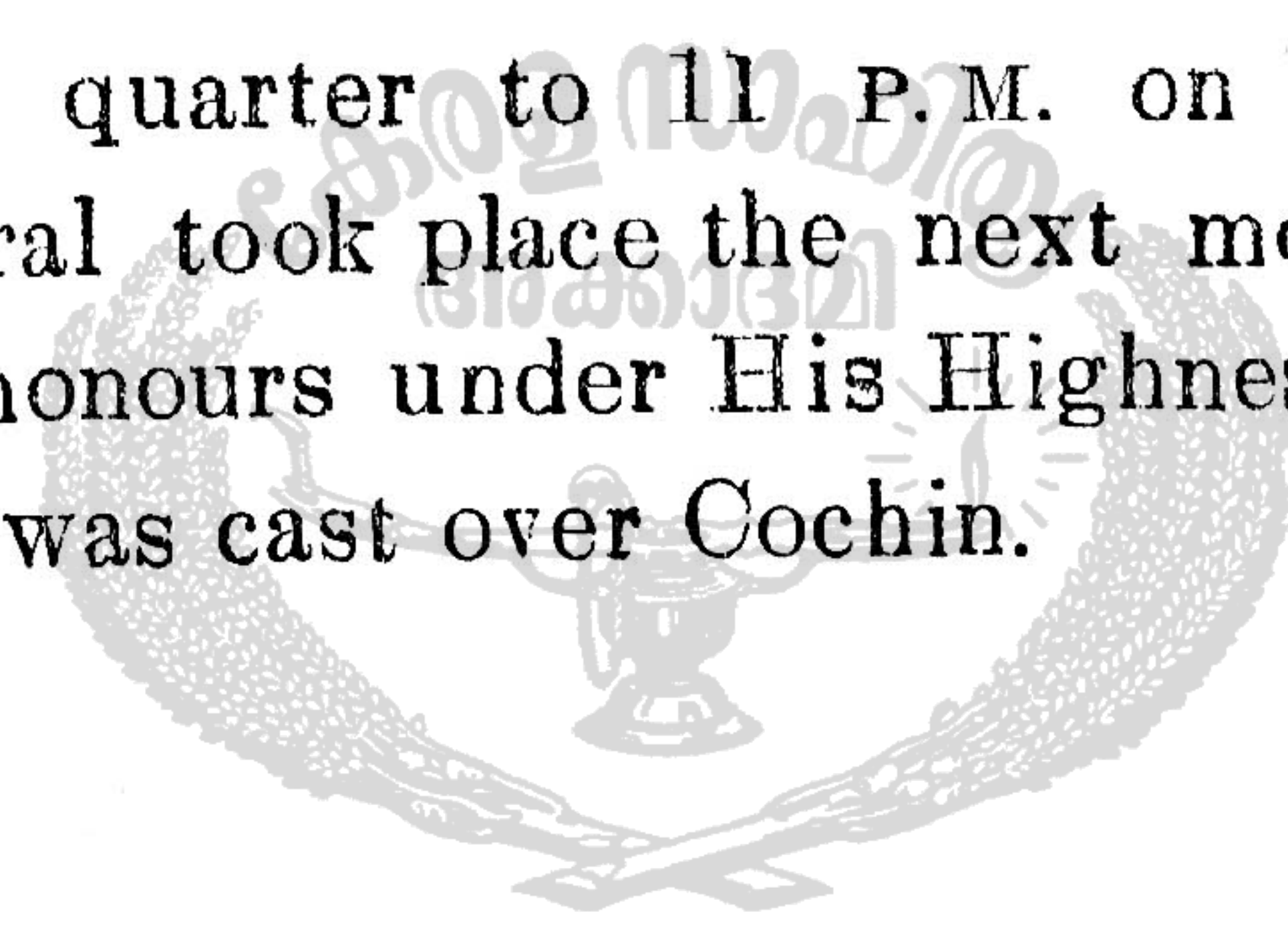
*"31st January 1882.—*I am glad to find that I have been, if anything, somewhat better during the *Utsavam* than before it. It is a pleasure to see His Highness's kind and honest face every day as I have been doing since his arrival."*

*"30th November 1882.—*I had the pleasure of seeing His Highness as he passed by our door. His Highness kindly stopped the carriage, and spoke a few words to me."

* His Highness spent a week at Ernakulam during the *Utsavam* in the local temple, going every day to the Diwan's residence for his morning bath.

"31st December.—Another year has passed by, one of more pain and suffering to me personally than the previous one."

His pain and suffering were now about to come to an end. While he was taking his breakfast on the 26th August 1883, he had a sudden paralytic stroke: he could not speak, and his right leg and right arm became inert. He gradually grew weaker, and breathed his last at a quarter to 11 P. M. on the 27th. His funeral took place the next morning with military honours under His Highness's orders. A gloom was cast over Cochin.



CHAPTER XI.

PERSONALIA.

And thus he bore without abuse

The grand old name of gentleman. TENNYSON.

Sankunni Menon was a man of medium height and robust build. He had a strong and well-knit physique, and was, before his health broke down, capable of considerable bodily exertion and endurance. He was a striking looking man. His handsome and distinguished presence, the penetrating glance of his dark flashing eyes, his high intellectual fore-head, his aquiline nose, his firm mouth and chin, his grave but pleasant countenance gave him such an air of distinction and dignity that a stranger passing him on the road was sure to turn round to have a second look at him and wonder who he was. If the stranger subsequently happened to become familiarly acquainted with him, the first impression would only be further strengthened by such familiarity.

Sankunni Menon's manner, his speech and his conduct were characterised by a grave, old-world courtsey and gentlemanliness, which in these days of fret and fury are not only rare but even out of fashion. The roughness of speech and surliness of manner, assumed by some of his Residents as part of their stock-in-trade as efficient administrators, grated on his feelings. Himself incapable of any word or deed unworthy of a gentleman in the best sense of the word, he could not understand such behaviour on the part of men who laid claims to the name of gentleman. He was naturally a man of strong passions, but those passions were sternly repressed in practice, so that he never used harsh language even to menial servants, much less to official subordinates. A mild and dignified rebuke from him, therefore, in view of its rareness and the nature of its source, was more keenly felt by his subordinates than the strong and explosive language and even vulgar abuse to which subordinate officers in Cochin became accustomed towards the close of the century. If he had to admini-

ster a rebuke or reprimand to a subordinate, he generally did it by word of mouth and but seldom in writing.

Sankunni Menon's was a well-balanced mind, accustomed to view men and things in their proper perspective. He never allowed his judgment to be warped by personal animus or blind prejudice, nor did he ever injure any one from personal motives. He had a large spirit of toleration, and made generous allowance for human failings. He did not take serious notice of little lapses, nor did he allow any lapse to go unnoticed. He was in his time accused by the people of favouritism, a charge which was brought to his notice by more than one Resident, and which cannot be said to have been altogether unfounded. It was however then considered a more venial offence than it is now, and it is certainly much more venial than the neglect of one's friends and relatives. It must further be remembered that to the charge of official nepotism no officer in those days, Indian or Anglo-Indian, could plead not guilty.

Another of Sankunni Menon's character-

istics, which was much noticed and commented upon in his time, was his equanimity, which nothing could ruffle. Whatever might have been his feelings, and he did sometimes feel keenly the imputation of unworthy motives, he always showed a calm undisturbed face to the world. He never allowed himself to be rattled or ruffled by adverse criticism, to which he was constantly subjected in his time. The cat calls of the press and of the writers of anonymous petitions he treated with what Mathew Arnold called "silent deep disdain." The *Atheneam* and *Daily News*, which was then the leading daily in Madras, more than once adversely criticised the administrations of Travancore and Cochin. Sir T. Madhava Rau, who had influential friends in Madras, had those criticisms answered, and advised Sankunni Menon to do likewise. But the latter refused to take this "unwise step, as it will only give the paper an opportunity to write more about and against us." Mr. Newile the Resident once called his attention to the constant attacks on the Diwan and his administration in a local paper. "*The Western Star*," Sankunni Menon replied on

the 29th July 1867, "is so seldom correct in his statements that I have hitherto treated his unfounded assertions with the contempt they deserve. It is difficult to follow any other course. I am too honest to pay him off, and as for replying to his attacks, it is out of the question. I have no time to spare for newspaper correspondence, and the editor has nothing else to do. He will commit himself some day or other." He did commit himself and that very soon, and Sankunni Menon may be pardoned for indulging in some jubilation over his enemy's discomfiture. "29th May 1868.—Mr. Walker, the editor of the *Western Star*, had a good thrashing from Captain Winckler. Mr. Walker abuses every one, preaches morality to them, and can find no good in any one, and I cannot help rejoicing in the punishment he has received for his impudence. The beating appears to have been very severe, and there is not a soul in Cochin who is not glad of it."

The same Resident Mr. Newile was in the habit of sending anonymous petitions to the Diwan and calling for information. On one such occasion Sankunni Menon wrote,—“This

paper is stated to be copy of one addressed to me. I had the honour of receiving the original and one or two papers of a similar description. I took no notice of these communications, being of opinion that the best course to be pursued with respect to such anonymous communications is to treat them with silent contempt."

With regard to another such petition, he remarks in his diary—"The Sarvadhī sends copy of a petition addressed to His Highness by V. Mullen and K. Menon complaining of their dismissal, charging the Diwan and his relations with all kinds of offences. I trust the petition is pseudonymous, as it would be the height of ingratitude to bring forward such unfounded and false charges against me, who always treated them with kindness and consideration. It appears that no one can do his duty without his motives being misunderstood."

It is generally those men who are fond of advertising themselves that are most affected by public criticism. In this respect Sankunni Menon formed a striking contrast to his friend Sir Madhava Rau. The former's aversion to all display and advertisement was almost mor-

bid. To the best of my recollection, I have not come across any references in his journals to complimentary notices in the press about himself. After his retirement, some of the advisors of his brother and successor urged him to give a complimentary account of his long administration in the next annual report on the administration of the State. This suggestion was peremptorily vetoed by both the brothers. On the repeated solicitation of the then Huzur Secretary, however, they reluctantly agreed to the publication in the report of His Highness's valedictory letter reproduced in the last chapter. Sankunni Menon moved about the State without any of the paraphernalia of his office. He went out for his morning walks generally attended by a young relative, but never by a belted peon. A characteristic incident is mentioned by him in his diary of the 18th May 1878. He was then spending the hot season at Chovera, when the Diwan of Travancore happened to arrive at Alway. "Went to Alway in the morning on a visit to the Diwan, and was received in state, a number of peons and harikars coming down to the landing place to

escort me, and a guard of honour being drawn up at the gate and presenting arms The Diwan returned my visit at 5 P. M. I could not return the compliment of a grand reception, as I had but a single peon with me!"

Sankunni Menon's loyalty and attachment to his sovereign and to all the members of the Royal family formed a prominent feature of his character. He treated every one of them, even infants in arms, with the utmost respect, and watched over their interests with scrupulous care and zeal. He always spoke to and of them deferentially, and insisted on others doing the same in his presence. Even in his private diaries, which were meant for no other eyes, no word could be found to which the most fastidious could take exception. In his later years he began to grow anxious about the steady increase in the strength of the Royal family. His journal shows that he viewed it with no small concern. "*25th November 1873.*—The Royal family is multiplying so rapidly that it would be difficult to maintain them decently." "*2nd July 1879.*—The Royal family is becoming most inconveniently

numerous. I don't know how they are all to be maintained. According to the prevailing custom they cannot work, and the State will hardly be able to maintain them properly."

If Sankunni Menon had any feeling stronger than his loyalty, it was his patriotism. He passionately loved his State, and was intensely jealous of its good name. Sankunni Menon, unlike his father, was fortunately spared the unpleasantness of making a choice between loyalty and patriotism. The only occasion on which he had anything like a difficulty of this nature was the one in connection with the Kuzhur dispute. But fortunately on that occasion the Maharaja himself took a correct view of the situation. "*25th November 1867.*—His Highness says that the only cause of displeasure he saw is the Achan's failure to punish those who caused the Kuzhur affray and that in other respects he is quite satisfied with the Achan's conduct." This enabled him "to remain in a wise and masterly inactivity" when some other members of His Highness's family showed a desire to bring the Achan to his knees by means which Sankunni Menon

could not stoop to. "22nd March 1868.— The Peishkar visited the Amma Raja last evening. She is very sorry on account of this dispute, but is still of opinion that I could get the matter settled very easily if I wished. What she means is that I should so frighten the Achan by threatening to assess his rent-free lands and to oppress him in other ways as to make him give up the pagoda to the Elaya Raja. If I re-open the question of his alleged rent-free tenures, it shall be for the benefit of the State and not for gaining such partly ends."

This feature of Sankunni Menon's character, his readiness to prevent oppression of every kind, was a source of great confidence and consolation to the people. When his approaching retirement was definitely announced, therefore, people in equivocal positions, like the Paliyat Achan, hastened to set their houses in order. Since the Kuzhur affray, the members of the Achan's family were denied access to the palace and also the consideration and privileges they enjoyed as the premier noblemen of the State. For several years they tried

without success to bring about a reconciliation with the palace, and successive Residents, especially Mr. Ballard, interested themselves on their behalf. Mr. Ballard went to the length of writing not only to His Highness but also to his mother the Senior Rani on the subject in 1873. His Highness replied that, in view of the marked indignity offered to her son the Elaya Raja by the Achan, the Amma Raja could not at present, without doing violence to her feelings, have any personal intercourse with the Achan, nor could she advise her sons to receive him on friendly terms. His Highness trusted, however, that "in time all these unpleasant feelings would subside and that on a future day the Achan would be restored to the position which he enjoyed at the Court of Cochin." The Elaya Raja was prepared to be reconciled to the Achan, provided the latter made over to him the Kuzhur Devaswam and its properties, and paid a fine of Rs. 5,000, this amount being utilised as an endowment to the Tripunittura Devaswam. The Achan was, however, unwilling to accept these conditions, and refused compliance with them for several

years. But when Sankunni Menon retired from the Diwanship, he felt it necessary to reconsider his decision, and within two months of that event, complied with the conditions, and was received by His Highness and other members of his family.

Sankunni Menon devoted a good deal of his time to settling disputes in families, Devaswams and Churches by friendly advice and remonstrance. Dissensions in many aristocratic and other families were composed and their ruin averted by his personal intervention. In most cases he had agreements executed by the members for the future management of the families. These agreements were generally prepared by his lieutenant Appattura Aiyar under his instructions, but some of them were drafted by Sankunni Menon himself. He took similar action in the case of disputes among the *Uralars* or trustees of Devaswams. As regards the Christian Churches, only those disputes found their way into the courts in his time in which the religious or party feeling involved ran too high even for Sankunni Menon's handling. Out of many such entries found in his

diaries two characteristic ones are given below to show his interest in the subject.

"11th May 1876.—Bishop Menrin called on me at 2 P.M., and we had a long conversation regarding the dissensions in the Romo-Syrian church in this country. The Bishop put three proposals before me ... Asked him to write to me about it, and said that the matter would receive my best consideration. I am sorry I do not see my way to obliging him.* His best resource is a criminal action against Bishop Mellus for uttering, if not forging, the Papal Bull. ... The Bishop is a pleasant man, and all the Catholics of the place including my writers were at the landing place to receive him."

* Nevertheless, Sankunni Menon did the best he could. In a demi-official letter to the Resident, after giving a full account of the dispute and Bishop Menrin's alternative proposals, he said— "Thus the two courses indicated by the Visitor Apostolic do not appear to be very promising. However, as every endeavour should be made to bring about an amicable settlement, and as it is most desirable to terminate, if possible, these unhappy disputes, I shall try to meet Bishop Mellus and the principal members of some of the divided congregations, and see whether such a settlement is possible. I must confess, however, that I am not very sanguine of success."

"28th. September 1877.—Received a visit from Mar Dionysius, the Syrian Metropolitan, or one of the Metropolitans, for there are a good number of them just now. I don't know how and when these disputes will be settled. The missionaries foment the quarrel in hopes of winning the Syrians over to the English Church."

The hospitality and liberality of Sankunni Menon and his brother have become almost proverbial in Cochin. Not a day passed without their having a number of guests to partake of the sumptuous meals provided in their house. These guests were welcomed without fuss or demonstration, and were made at home in a manner peculiarly their own. As for the people who had received pecuniary help or complimentary presents from them, their name was legion. Scores of students received their education partly or wholly through their munificence. No marriage or other ceremony took place in the family of any relative, friend, subordinate or dependent without his receiving a handsome present from them, while many in distress were quietly supplied with unsolicited and unexpected gifts. •

"13th January 1873.— R. G's wedding. My brother and sons attended. Sent him Rs. 100 as a present"

"10th May 1872.— Marriage in H. I's family. Sent Rs. 25. These presents cost me a good deal of money."

*"26th May 1872.—*The Muttad girl is to accompany her husband to her new home tomorrow, and as the old Muttad has not been able to collect the Rs. 200 due to the husband for her dowry, I made him a present of Rs. 50."

*30th October 1877.—*Poor Rice lost his third son. The father is a reckless man, and as he has not a pie in his possession, I sent him Rs. 50 to enable him to buy mourning for himself and children."

*"31st August 1879.—*I am sorry to hear that Ana Embran is no more. He was a good old dependent of my father's, and as he was very poor and had acquired rather luxurious habits, he used to come and stay with us very often, and also to receive substantial assistance from us. We gave him Rs. 200 the other day to complete his house-building.

Of all the Diwans of Cochin Sankunni Menon was the most highly esteemed by Europeans and the most popular among them.

They took a pride in having him at their functions, and insisted on his becoming a member of their Club.* At one marriage at least, that of Mr. Clarke with Miss. Aspinwall, they prevailed upon Sankunni Menon to sign the register as a witness and propose the health of the bride and bridegroom. Before his time European officers had the privilege of addressing the Resident direct, but a few years after Sankunni Menon's appointment they ceased to exercise it of their own accord. These may be small matters, but they are unusual and significant. At the public meeting held on Sankunni Menon's retirement, Europeans mustered unusually strong, and about a fifth of the subscriptions collected on the occasion came from them.

Sankunni Menon was a great lover of books. In his later years his reading was confined almost wholly to novels and periodical literature. In his better days, however, his reading took a much wider range, history and biography being his favourites. The Curato

* "I join the Cochin Club at the request of Mr Rhodes and others, but I don't know what benefit I am going to derive from it."

of the Public Library at Ernakulam once told me that Sankunni Menon made a more extensive use of that institution than any one else in his time. He had also formed a good library of his own by periodically indenting for such books as took his fancy from reading reviews or hearing about them from friends. I have come across one such indent, which includes, among others, Drawin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*, Wilkes' *History of Haider Naick*, Ramson's *Bhagavat-gita* with translation and notes, and a treatise on pyrotechnics. Sankunni Menon had gathered much information about the history of Cochin, but unfortunately made no use of it. But for failing health, he would probably have written something on the subject when his friend and namesake brought out his *History of Travancore*. I have seen his copy of this work with the copious critical notes he had made in the margin. "1st August 1875.—Sankunni Menon Peishkar paid me a visit, and showed me the first chapter of his *History of Travancore*. It is a crude production, and his whole aim seems to be to show that the Royal family is very

ancient, and belongs not to the Samanta caste, as is generally believed, but to the Kshatriya caste. There is also some reflections on Cochin which will have to be answered if the book is published."

As the reader must already have observed, Sankunni Menon was a good writer. He was always happy in his choice of words and his arrangement of matter. His English as well as Malayalam was easy, clear and idiomatic; there were no flourishes or straining after effect. He was however a slow writer, as he often complained himself. He took considerable time in arranging his thoughts and, in a smaller degree, in choosing his words. He could not draft an important letter or minute when he had any other distractions. "*15th May 1871.*— I left Chovera with the full intention of completing my reply to the Resident about the Court of Ultimate Appeal on my arrival here (Ernakulam), but unfortunately I commenced to read a novel on my way hither and, as usual with me in such cases, I cannot fix my attention steadily upon anything else until it is over." He wrote all his private letters and

most of his demi-officials in his own characteristic hand, which was both bold and clear.

Sankunni Menon did not shine as a speaker. He was shy and reserved by nature, and nervous and self-conscious by temperament. He hardly ever attempted public speaking; in fact, he avoided it like pestilence. He was fond of social converse and delighted in good conversation, but his share in it generally consisted in listening and setting the ball in motion. Subrahmanya Pillai was somewhat like him in this respect, so that, when the two friends met without the presence of a third party, there was usually more of the eloquence of silence than of speech. Sankunni Menon's gravity and reserve almost disappeared in the company of his intimates, whose number was, however, very limited. With them he talked gaily and cracked jokes, and even played practical jokes upon them. He was also extraordinarily fond of children. He could spend hours with them, and apparently found their prattle more delightful than the conversation of grown up men. And they, in their turn, instinctively recognised a friend in him, and took to him as

ducks to water. His diary is full of his intercourse with children. "Played with the children in the morning." "Spent an hour with the children." "I spent an hour or so with the girls in small talk. The children are very amusing, and serve to kill time and care." "My days in Trichur were spent pleasantly enough, doing little work, fondling children, and quarrelling with the girls."



CHAPTER XII.

SANKUNNI MENON'S BROTHER.

And should my youth, as youth is apt, I know,
Some harshness show,
All vain asperities I day by day
Would wear away,
Till the smooth temper of my age should be
Like the high leaves upon the Holly-Tree.

SOUTHEY.

Thòttèkàt Govinda Menon, the younger of the two sons of Sankara Variyar, was born at Ernakulam on the 28th August 1823. He was educated and brought up with his brother, and up to a certain stage his life was the exact replica of that of the latter. Some of the details of that life and the reason why he did not rise beyond that stage are given in a private letter written by Sankunni Menon to Mr. Newill in September 1866.

“We were educated together at Trivandram. In 1847 when I accepted service under the Civil Judge of Calicut, he was appointed Head Police Gu-mastah (in my room) under my father, the then



T. GOVINDA MENON.

Diwan of Cochin. About a year or two afterwards, at Mr. Morris' request he went to Calicut, and was appointed Nazir of his Court, and shortly afterwards he succeeded me as Sheristadar of the Principal Sadr Amin's Court at Cochin. The Collectors of Malabar offered to make him a Tahsildar, and the Civil Judge offered him the Sheristadarship of his own court, but my father did not wish both his sons to be away from him, and my brother consequently has been the Sheristadar of the Principal Sadr Amin's Court for the last fifteen years. Lately he accepted Mr. Ballard's offer of the Tahsildarship of Walvanad, and was actually appointed to that post. But unfortunately I became very ill about that time, and wanted his assistance, and he therefore resigned the appointment. Of his character and fitness you will be able to judge from the enclosed extract from the register of uncovenanted servants on the establishment of the Principal Sadr Amin's Court at Cochin, and I feel confident that any gentleman who is acquainted with him will confirm the opinion expressed of him by Messrs. Morris, Cullin and Dawes. When the Trichur judgeship became vacant last year, His Highness the Raja expressed a wish to appoint him as Mr. Mello's successor, but I had no wish to weaken the effect of the dismissal of the judges by giving occa-

sion for a suspicion that I had caused their removal in order to provide for my own brother, and I accordingly recommended the appointment of another person to that post."

In other words, Govinda Menon sacrificed his official prospects to make things easy first for his father and then for his brother. When he was still a young man, he could easily have risen to the grade of a Sub-judge or a Deputy Collector, but the health and comfort of his father and his brother appeared to him to be of far greater importance than his own official advancement. He was so passionately devoted to them that he would have been quite astonished, if any one told him that any sacrifice was involved in his action. Sankara Variyar was probably prouder of his elder son, but he was decidedly fonder of the younger. As for Sankunni Menon, his brother's companionship and attention gradually became indispensable to him. Govinda Menon looked after his brother's private affairs and attended to his health and comfort with exemplary assiduity, and relieved him of all private cares and worries in

a quiet and unobtrusive manner peculiarly his own.

Since his brother's appointment as Diwan and till his own appointment to that office, Govinda Menon's life was, as it were, merged in that of the former; there were no separate episodes or achievements claiming the attention of his biographer. No administration could of course be perfect. Sankunni Menon's had its own share of sins both of commission and omission. It was however the fashion in those days to treat Govinda Menon as the power behind throne, and father the faults of the administration on him and to give the credit of all its merit to his brother. This was the view taken not only by the man in the street but also by some of the Residents. It is however, difficult for those who, like the present writer, knew Govinda Menon intimately in his later years to endorse this view.

An unfortunate incident occurred in 1870, which went far to prejudice the Residents against Govinda Menon. When Mr. Walker, the Editor of the *Western Star*, got into trouble, some of his private papers fell into the hands

of Captain Castor, the Port Officer of Cochin, and among these were a few compromising letters to Walker from Vedadrisadasa Mudaliar and P. Sankunni Menon of Travancore. Castor's brother-in-law sent anonymous letters to these officers, demanding Rs. 800 for the return of these letters and threatening, in the event of non-compliance, to send them to the Resident. The two Travancore officers requested their friend Govinda Menon to get possession of the letters at any cost, which the latter succeeded in doing with considerable difficulty. He also managed to reduce Castor's demand to a hundred rupees, which the latter, under pressure from some of his friends, eventually handed over to the local Friend-in-Need Society. These scandalous proceedings soon became public, whereupon the District Magistrate of Malabar held an enquiry into the matter, which ended in Captain Castor being convicted and fined in the sum of five hundred rupees. The conviction was, however, quashed on appeal and the fine remitted, but the Captain was transferred to Masulipatam.

Two Europeans were the real delinquents in

this matter, but, as is often the practice in such cases, an Indian was sought to be made the scape-goat. Mr. Macgregar appears to have written to the Resident against Govinda Menon, and Mr. Minchin at once addressed the Diwan on the subject. "I am most sorry," he said, "that your brother, through the culpable weakness of the Mudaliar, should have in any way assisted Captain Castor in carrying out his nefarious extortion. It is my duty to tell you that the residence of your brother with yourself lays you open to most unpleasant observations. Your own character, I am glad to think, is too high for the conduct of a relative to stain it, but in your best interests I must say that I think it most advisable that your brother should leave Cochin, and obtain an exchange to some other court. Believe me that in writing this I am actuated solely by a jealousy for your reputation." Sankunni Menon's reply was characteristic. "I have heard with much concern that reports injurious to the character of my brother have been communicated to you. While thanking you for the kind interest you have evinced in my behalf, I

must assure you that these reports are totally unfounded and that there is not in this part of the country a native gentleman of greater integrity and higher principles than my brother. When you come to know him better, I am confident that you will be convinced of the truth of what I now assert."

Govinda Menon's chief pre-occupation during this period was coffee planting, his being one of the first plantations on the Nelliampathis. It was not an extensive estate like those of some of the European companies, but it was so economically and efficiently managed that, during the quarter of a century in which it was in a flourishing condition, he was able to make a net profit of several lakhs of rupees. His investments on land at a time when land was comparatively cheap eventually turned out to be uncommonly successful. All this enabled the brothers to live in a lordly style and at the same time to make substantial provision for their family.

After a service of thirty years Govinda Menon retired on pension in June 1879. It was probably the fact of his retirement taking

place at the time when that of Sankunni Menon became practically unavoidable that first suggested his name to His Highness in connection with the succession to the Diwanship. His Highness knew him as long and as intimately as he did his brother, and he knew also that his stagnation in the British service was due not to want of ability or opportunity but to his own deliberate choice. Be that as it might, His Highness was determined, as we have seen, that Govinda Menon should succeed his brother. This choice was a great surprise to many, but to none greater than to the object of it himself. "In the afternoon," says Sankunni Menon on the 7th June 1879, "myself and brother paid our respects to His Highness. He asked my brother if he would not take up the post, and the latter answered, as he had sent word on a former occasion, that he was not desirous of obtaining the office, and that he was doubtful of his ability to discharge the duties thereof satisfactorily, but that, if His Highness wished, he could not refuse. His Highness said that he wished it and that he would now permit me to retire without unreason as he

felt sure that he (brother) would have my advice and assistance and that everything would be conducted as heretofore." His Highness had misgivings about the attitude of the Resident, who happened to be Mr. Macgregor and whose prejudice against Govinda Menon was well known. The following extract from his letter to the Resident gives his reasons for choosing Govinda Menon as his Diwan:—

"It is now time to look out for a successor. As I am ignorant of any other language than Malayalam and Sanskrit and as I do not moreover pretend to be a statesman myself, it is necessary that the Diwan should be a man in whose integrity, judgment and tact I have perfect confidence. Now, although the Diwan Peishkar Sankara Aiyar is honest and not without some ability, I have no confidence in his judgment or tact. He will do very well as a subordinate, but I do not think it will be safe to place him at the head of the administration. Besides, I should like to have for my Diwan a native of the country, as no one will take the same interest in the prosperity of the country and be as anxious to obtain the good will of the sovereign as a native.

"The only one I can think of as possessing all

the requisite qualifications is the present Diwan's brother Govinda Menon. He has received the same education as his brother and has been brought up in principles similar to his own. I have known him from my infancy and have great confidence in him. You are probably aware that he has been thirty years in the British service. He also served for almost two years under his late father Diwan Sankara Variyar. The offices he had hitherto held are, it is true, of comparatively an unimportant nature; but, as he has been living with the late Diwan Sankara Variyar and subsequently the present Diwan, making himself acquainted with all that has been taking place in the country for a very long time, he is better prepared to take up the office of Diwan and to follow in the footsteps of his father and brother than any other individual that I can think of. He will moreover have the advantage of being able to obtain, when necessary, the advice and assistance of the present Diwan, which no one can seek so freely as a brother."

The Resident replied that the Government of Madras approved of His Highness's choice, and added.—"In condoling with your Highness in the loss of so trustworthy a minister as Sankunni Menon, I am glad that he

will be succeeded by a relative possessing your Highness's confidence. I trust that the result may justify the anticipation of the continued prosperity and good government of your country." Govinda Menon accordingly assumed charge of the Diwanship on the 22nd August 1879.

Govinda Menon's appointment naturally caused a great deal of surprise and some heart-burning. But many, including the European officers in the service of the State, cordially welcomed the choice. To one great man who had known the brothers intimately for a long time the choice did not apparently seem to be strange. Sir T. Madhava Rao, who was then the Diwan-Regent of Baroda, wrote on the 30th August.—"The newspapers just to hand announce your appointment to the Diwanship of the Cochin State. On this important event let me cordially congratulate you. I wish you a long tenure of that high office. You will doubtless materially add to the valuable services rendered for many years by your distinguished father and brother as your predecessors in office. ..."

During the first three or four years of his administration Govinda Menon received, as has already been mentioned, great help from his brother, especially in preparing Cochin's case in the boundary and territorial disputes with Travancore. These disputes had for nearly three quarters of a century been the subject of acrimonious correspondence between the two States and a source of vexation to both parties. In 1880 both parties agreed, at the instance of the Madras Government, to have the disputes settled by arbitration, and the Government accordingly appointed Mr. J. C. Hannington as arbitrator. The whole length of boundary between the two States was demarcated by the Arbitrator after hearing the claims of both parties, and his decision in this matter was final according to the terms of the arbitration agreement. In the territorial cases, of which there were five, the Arbitrator's decision was subject to appeal to the Madras Government. These cases related to the sovereign right over the Idiyara range of hills with the adjoining territory, the right of Travancore to nominate

a person to the office of *Tachudaya Kaimal* to manage the affairs of the Kudalmanikkam temple at Irinjalakuda, the sovereign right over certain villages appertaining to the Elamkunnappuzha, Annamanada and Perumanam temples and the right to manage those temples and their endowments. The first dispute was decided in favour of Cochin by the Arbitrator, but his award was reversed by the Madras Government, and the Idiyara range, *without* the adjoining territory, was adjudged to belong to Travancore. The right of Travancore to nominate the *Tachudaya Kaimal* was upheld both in original and in appeal, while in the case of the other three temples the right of sovereignty was declared to vest in Cochin, but the right of management of the pagodas and their endowments was awarded to Travancore. The settlement was on the whole a triumph for Cochin. In the case of the Elamkunnappuzha and Annamanada temples, Travancore soon found the right of management an inconvenient one, and gave it up a few years later. *

* Sankunni Menon says— "2nd November 1882.— I am glad to have been spared to see the end of a fight

The judicial reforms which were under discussion in his predecessor's time were carried out by Govinda Menon. By Regulation I of 1057 the Raja's Court of Appeal was constituted in 1882. Appeals against certain classes of cases were to be heard by a single judge of the Appeal Court, against whose decision an appeal lay to the Raja's Court, which was generally to be heard by the other two judges of the Appeal Court, the Diwan having, in cases in which the Sirkar was not a party, the power to direct the appeal to be heard by the two judges in association with himself. Their decisions were to be submitted through the Diwan to His Highness for confirmation, and they could be pronounced only after they were so confirmed. Two years later, the criminal branch of judicial administration was completely reorganised by the enactment of the Police Regulation, and the Cochin Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes, which were

which was commenced in my time and in which I took great interest." "31st December 1882.— The long pending boundary disputes have been settled generally in our favour."

adapted from the corresponding British Indian Acts. A police force was organised on modern lines, the Tahsildars were divested of their police functions, and the Diwan of his magisterial duties. The Tahsildars were appointed subordinate magistrates under the new Code, and the two Peishkars were made District Magistrates with original and appellate jurisdiction.

Considerable progress was made in several directions in Govinda Menon's time. The existing schools were better organised and their standard raised, English schools for girls were opened for the first time, and a grant-in-aid code was passed, and several schools brought into the aided list. Four new hospitals were established, those at Tripunittura, Irinjalakuda, Kunnamkulam and Chittur. A good many notable public buildings were constructed, the Mulattura anicut was reconstructed and the Chittur irrigation system largely extended. The gross income of the State rose from 13·9 to 17·9 lakhs of rupees, and the balance to the credit of the State from 28 to 33 lakhs.

After the death of his brother in August

1883, Govinda Menon would have been glad to be relieved of his responsibility, but His Highness would not hear of it. His Highness extended the same confidence and favour to him as to his brother, but did not naturally entertain the same high esteem for him. The Resident Mr. Macgregor was inclined to give him trouble, but he left the State early in 1881. The following extracts from Sankunni Menon's journals will show the attitude and character of Macgregor.

"13th June 1879.— The Resident is becoming very discourteous. He asks Sankara Aiyar not only to have the Aminadar examined by the doctor to see if he has received any ill-treatment, but also to take his deposition in the presence of some European officer who is acquainted with the language. Fancy his thinking that the Diwan Peishkar would concoct depositions."

"20th May 1880.— Mr. Macgregor sends a letter to the Diwan about special appeals, finding fault with His Highness's Government for leaving this matter unsettled for such a length of time, whereas the delay is entirely due to him, as he has left unanswered for more than a year a definite proposal

I made to him. He is becoming very disagreeable in his official correspondence.”

“*27th July 1880.*— Mr. Macgregor sends a demi-official to my brother in which he charges Cheruvattur Namburi with giving bad advice to His Highness in state affairs, and threatening to make further enquiry and report to Government, if the railway scheme is not acceded to. He seems determined to obtain His Highness’s consent to the large guarantee, and does not scruple to hold out the above threat for carrying the above point.”

His successor Mr. Hannington, who was a thorough gentleman and who had a correct conception of his duty, treated the Diwan with consideration, and was very helpful to him. Thus, Govinda Menon had not a particularly difficult time, though he had his share of minor worries in full measure.

The Raja fell seriously ill in April 1888, and, gradually becoming worse, he died on the 30th June. His Highness was succeeded by his brother Raja Virakerala Varma, who, though he had not given audience to Govinda Menon for over twenty years, now received him cordially. Four months after his accession, Govinda Menon requested His Highness’s permission to

retire, but the latter pressed him to remain in office for some time longer. He repeated his request in the following July, when His Highness was pleased to agree to his retirement. "I am glad to say," Govinda Menon writes to the Resident, "that His Highness spoke to me very kindly and expressed his regret at my wishing to retire and the difficulty he is under in getting a fitting successor. He said he did not like to import a foreigner and that he will, in communication with you, make up his mind who in the service should be selected and that he expected me to assist him, even when out of office, with my counsel and advice." Govinda Menon accordingly retired on the 12th September 1889 after a service of ten years as Diwan and a few days after his sixty-fourth birthday.

Govinda Menon was his brother's inferior in most respects. His intellectual equipment was not of the same high order, but he was a man of sterling common sense and phenomenal tact. He cannot be said to have been a well read man except in history. His knowledge of history, especially of European history, was extensive, if not profound. Though he was

master of an easy flowing style, he was wanting in self-confidence as a writer. It is doubtful if he ever drafted an important official communication himself, but he kept up an extensive demi-official and private correspondence. His demi-official and private letters, written in graceful and idiomatic English and in his bold, clear and well-formed hand, were always delightful reading. As an administrator, he did not leave any great mark on the history of Cochin. He was well content to drive the administrative car along the track made by his brother, and in this he was fairly successful.

Govinda Menon was every inch a gentleman. He was characterised, even more strikingly than his brother, by a high-bred, old-world courtesy, which is very rare in these days. Dignified in appearance and conduct, courteous in word and deed, considerate to subordinates and dependents, he was easy and free without being free and easy with all sorts and conditions of men. He had a genius for managing people without driving them, and for picking their brains by kindness and tact. He did not share the faith of some of his successors that a

rough behaviour and harsh language were the necessary adjuncts of efficiency; he preferred, wherever possible, to manage people by kindness and consideration. His treatment of disaffected and refractory subordinates reminds one of the well-known lines of Morris—

“He kicked them downstairs with such a sweet
grace,

They may think he was handing them up.”

Another striking characteristic of Govinda Menon was the equanimity of his temper, which no provocation or outward circumstance could ruffle. The administrative head of a state with his powers and responsibilities could not but have moments of elation and moments of depression, but Govinda Menon never gave you the idea that he had any but placid moments. He had for you the same pleasant smile and genial greeting on all occasions. Like his brother, he had a large spirit of toleration, and made ample allowance for humanity's faults and failings. He was never intolerant of criticism or differences of opinion. His administration was at times attacked virulently and unfairly, but, though he more than suspected

who the writers were, he never showed towards them any sign of resentment, much less of vindictiveness. These newspaper attacks were mainly due to the fact that Govinda Menon was not always happy in the choice of his advisers and confidants and that he gave a freer hand to his departmental heads than any of his predecessors or successors. During the latter part of his administration many young graduates were newly entertained in the service. These young men, with their hot blood and new ideas, were disposed to make things unpleasant for their chief, and Govinda Menon's attitude towards them was that of a father reproving his refractory sons rather than that of the head of an administration dealing out disciplinary measures to erring subordinates.

Govinda Menon was singularly regular and simple in his habits, and scrupulously punctual in keeping his engagements. He carried his regularity to such a pitch that any one well acquainted with his habits could say with considerable certainty in what part of Cochin he was at a given time and what he was then doing. He spent most of his time at head

quarters; but October invariably saw him at Trichur, and April and May at Chowera. The pomp and circumstance of office had as little attraction for him as for his father or brother; and he therefore allowed only the minimum of it required by his position. Some of the heads of departments and offices in his time, who were ostentatiously inclined, used to grumble at him for setting an example of simplicity which they had reluctantly to follow. Punctuality he looked upon as politeness in action, and the law of politeness he was constitutionally incapable of offending against. He once told a prince who sought his advice in regard to a delicate matter that politeness was perhaps the only thing in this world of which an excess could not be deprecated.

The period of eleven years and a half which he spent in retirement has always appeared to the present writer to have been the most enviable part of Govinda Menon's life. It afforded an example of *otium cum dignitate* at its best. During this period which covered the administration of three of his successors, many things were said and done, with or

without intention, which were calculated to give him displeasure, if not offence. But neither by word nor deed nor even by facial expression did he show the least sign of resentment or displeasure. The calm dignity and the serene simplicity were always there. The old man lived a life of enjoyment and ease, free from all cares and worries and surrounded by friends and relatives, and died full of years and honours on the 21st January 1901.



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